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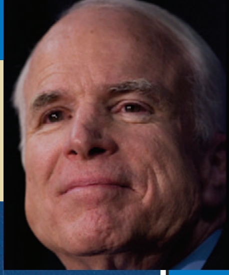

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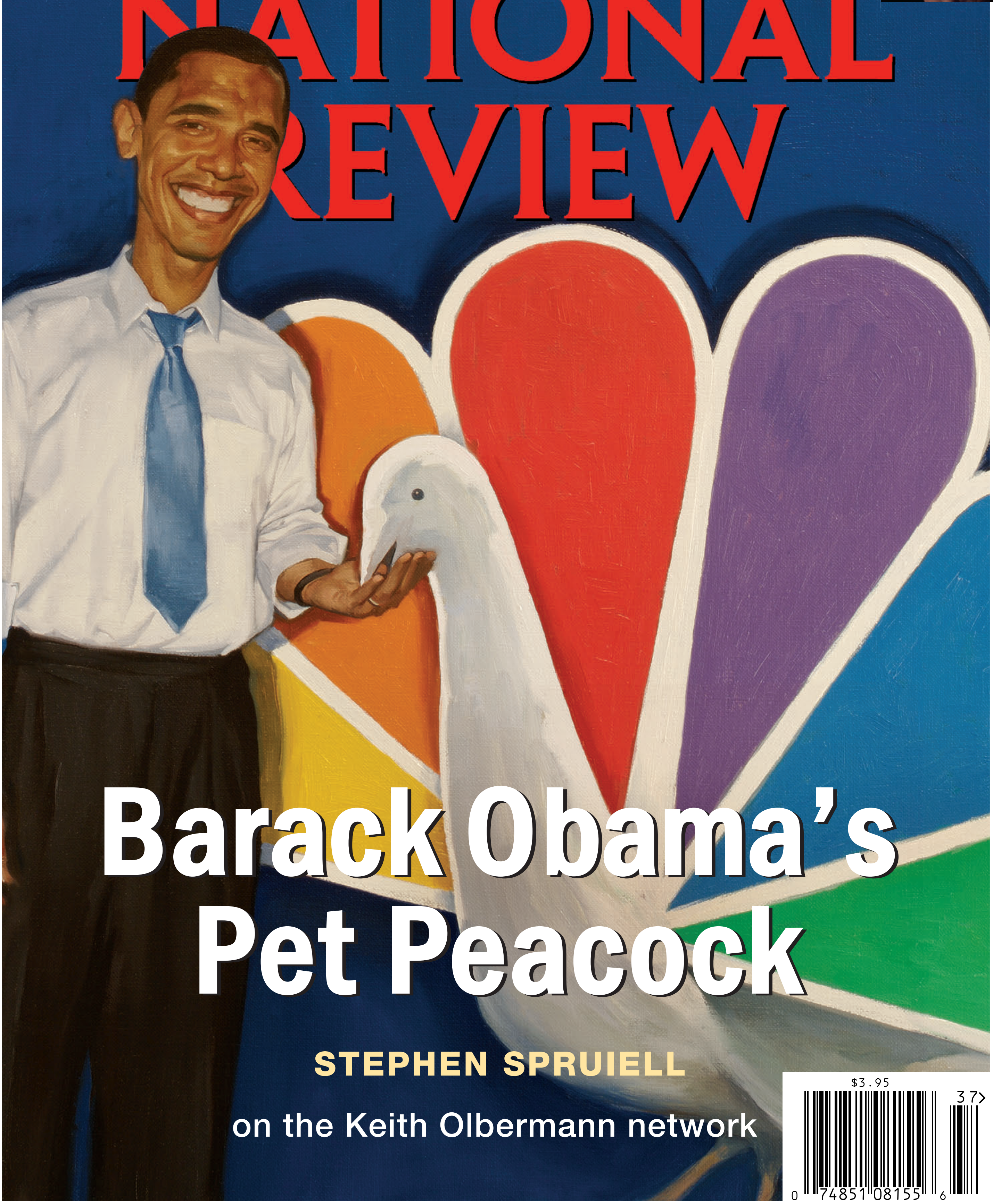

Barack Obama's Pet Peacock

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NATIONAL REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 15, 2008 VOL. LX, NO. 17

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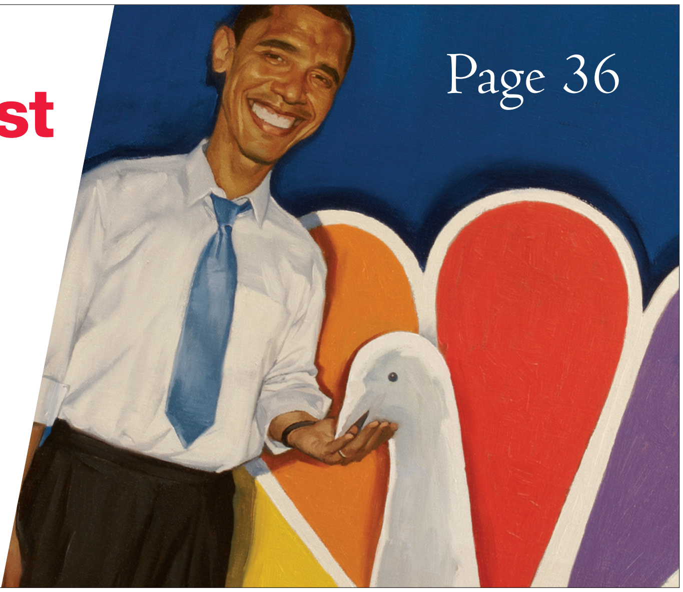
■ COVER STORY

Olbermann Broadcast Corporation

Keith Olbermann's MSNBC is not becoming a network for liberals. No. Under Olbermann, MSNBC is in the process of becoming a network for the far Left—a development that poses a big problem for NBC's news division. *By Stephen Spruiell*



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letters to the editor

BEHIND EVERY GREAT MAN . . .

Thank you for the obituary of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn ("The Week," September 1). I'm grateful that you remember his work and write appreciatively of his life.

However, I'd like to point out that you extend sympathy only to his sons. Not only is his widow, Natalya, alive, but she was a vital partner in his life and work. Their sons were children, two of them still less than two years old, when the KGB invaded their home in 1974 and took Solzhenitsyn away by force.

Solzhenitsyn writes about his wife in the final paragraphs of *The Oak and the Calf*:

> She now had to . . . transfer to Switzerland by land, sea, or air my whole enormous archive, including twelve years of preparatory materials . . . without losing a single piece of paper, not even an ordinary file folder, and put it all in the same drawers of the same desk when it arrived. On the way, she must not fail to carry every single page of importance . . . through the steel ring of controls at the frontier, must give them no chance to use the dozen photocopying machines kept ready in the customs sheds, must above all not let them take anything *away* from her, because it is impossible, physically impossible, for the Soviet regime to release so much as a single sheet of paper that is not to its liking.
>
> My wife succeeded in this task. Otherwise, here in exile I would have been a helpless cripple, lamenting my plight, not a writer. How she did it is yet another story.

Only their sons could tell you of Natalya Solzhenitsyn's continuing help during the years of exile and the years after their return to Russia. Perhaps someday they will. For the present, please extend your sympathy to her also.

Lee Browne
Ellensburg, Wash.

DUELING BATMEN

In "Too Many Rules" (August 18), a respectful but ultimately dismissive review of *The Dark Knight*, Ross Douthat states that Tim Burton's Batman films will hold up better than Christopher Nolan's. Permit this aging fanboy to disagree.

Burton's Dr. Seuss–meets–Maurice Sendak visual style was never a good match for Batman. Burton expressed ambivalence about the character in interviews. More often than not, Burton's films pursue weirdness at the expense of narrative and character development. Add to that the catastrophic miscasting of Michael Keaton in the title role and the basically plotless screenplays for *Batman* and *Batman Returns*, and you end up with a mess.

Nolan, on the other hand, understands that movies must be about something. He bravely explores the theme that extraordinary criminals like the Joker require extraordinary crime fighters like Batman, but underscores the need to preserve individual liberties. He also knows his way around an action scene, unlike Burton.

The fact that quite a few liberal critics and bloggers decried the film's politics should be a clue. I know nothing of Christopher Nolan's politics, but for Douthat to gloss over the overtly conservative themes in the movie is a missed opportunity.

Rick Medlin
La Mesa, Calif.

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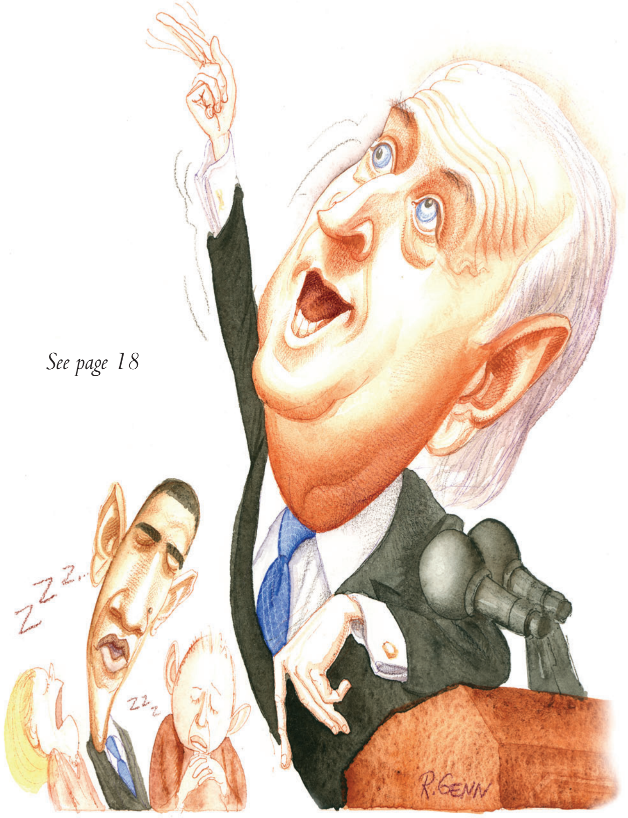
THE WEEK

■ Change you can believe in: We've been wondering for 35 years what it would take to get Joe Biden out of the Senate.

■ For the press, intra-Democratic disputes have all the intrinsic interest, and all the unpleasantness, of a fight within one's social circle. So coverage of the opening days of the Democratic convention dwelt on whether the Clintons and their loyalists would make up with the Obama forces. McCain got in the act by suggesting, in an ad, that Obama had slighted Clinton by passing her over as his running mate. Good clean fun, so long as everyone, including McCain, remembers that not all of the voters who chose her in the primaries were the kind of people who lined up a few years ago to buy her autobiography. As the primaries wore on, Clinton began getting votes from working-class white and Hispanic voters who felt that Obama was weak, inexperienced, and condescending. Clinton's strategists said that these voters were "invisible," and so they have proven to reporters who seem to think that Obama and McCain are competing for the support of feminists. Let's hope that McCain has better eyesight.

■ John McCain committed a whopper when he ducked a *Politico* question about how many houses he has. The Obama campaign was happy to supply the figure (seven, several of them worth more than a million each). Everybody knows, the log-cabin myth notwithstanding, that most presidents and presidential candidates have been rich. The savvy know that this is true even of those given to class-war rhetoric (John Edwards, Ted Kennedy, FDR). If McCain offers middle-class voters tax cuts, they will forgive him for being rich.



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ROMAN GENN

■ During his days in the Illinois state legislature, Barack Obama opposed bills to provide legal protection to infants who survive botched abortions. When one such bill came to a vote, he worried that it would expose abortionists to legal liability, though in recent years he has claimed that he opposed the bill only because it failed to indicate that it left abortion itself unregulated. If it had included the same abortion-protective language as federal legislation on the subject, Obama says, he would have supported it. But it has now become impossible to deny that the Illinois bill had identical language. Obama has fallen back on the claim that the law was unnecessary, since infants already had legal protection. That isn't true, either: The state attorney general had said that he could do nothing to help some infants who survived abortions. Obama has called his critics, chiefly those at the National Right to Life Committee, liars, although he has yet to identify anything they have gotten wrong—and their story, unlike his, has stayed the same. Obama protests that it is terrible to accuse someone of supporting infanticide. Ordinarily he would be right. But it is even more terrible actually to have supported infanticide.

■ Bill Ayers is an unrepentant terrorist responsible for various bombings. He is also a friend of Barack Obama, who now dismisses Ayers as just "some guy who lives in my neighborhood"—albeit a guy who, along with his wife and fellow Weather Underground terrorist Bernardine Dohrn, hosted Obama's political coming-out party at their home in 1995. In fact, Obama and Ayers had a close working relationship. They sat together on the board of the Woods Fund, a left-wing charity, and collaborated on an education "reform" project called the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, begun in 1995 when an Ayers proposal won a huge foundation grant. Ayers ran the CAC's operational arm; Obama chaired the board. Together, they were responsible for distributing over $100 million—with no discernible improvement in Chicago's schools but great advantage for their ideological allies. This summer, after being assured of access, frequent NATIONAL REVIEW contributor Stanley Kurtz was barred from reviewing the CAC records housed at the University of Illinois at Chicago,

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THE WEEK...

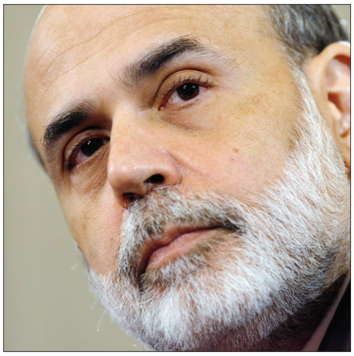
where Ayers is a professor of education. As we went to press, the ban had been lifted after considerable public pressure. But the attempts to suppress this story continue. After a conservative group ran an ad attacking Obama's association with Ayers, Obama asked the feds to investigate the group. And he says that Bush is trampling our civil liberties?

■ Before Barack Obama announced his vice-presidential pick via text message, more than one pundit joked that he should do so at 3:00 A.M., just as a slap at Hillary Clinton. Lo and behold, that is about the time the announcement went out. Even assuming the timing was unintentional, Obama's handlers probably should have made sure the message went out at a different hour. What's most annoying is that the campaign presumed to wake people up in the middle of the night.

■ Jacob Weisberg of *Slate* is an either/or guy. If Obama wins, he writes, "we would finally be able to see our legacy of slavery, segregation and racism in the rearview mirror. Our kids would grow up thinking of prejudice as a nonfactor in their lives." But if he loses, "our children will grow up thinking of equal opportunity as a myth. . . . When handed a perfect opportunity to put the worst part of our history behind us, we chose not to." Reality is more complex than that. Legal restrictions on black voting were eliminated only as recently as 1965, yet since then a manifestly unqualified black man has made two serious runs for the Democratic nomination, and a lightly qualified black man has won it. This is progress, whoever wins in November. On the other hand, stupid white people give themselves the heebie-jeebies over how we (meaning everybody except them) could still blow it. This is stasis, and it will be with us a lot longer than November.

■ When it comes to oil and energy, now is an excellent time for Congress to do nothing. If nothing happens, the federal ban on producing petroleum from the 1.76 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf will expire on October 1, uncorking significant new supplies of oil and gas while sending a message to world energy markets that the game has changed. Unfortunately, a bipartisan group of senators calling itself the Gang of Ten is pressing for a different approach. They would swap access to a bit of the Gulf of Mexico for a permanent ban on drilling in most of the OCS, completely shutting off potentially rich supplies in the Pacific. This deal is, quite literally, worse than doing nothing.

■ To avoid a reprise of 9/11, the Justice Department has worked to shift the FBI from traditional policing, in which crimes are investigated after the fact, to an intelligence orientation, aimed at preventing attacks by breaking up cells and plots at an early stage. Attorney general Michael Mukasey has issued new investigative guidelines to solidify that shift. Predictably, Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Patrick Leahy is objecting, with an assist from the committee's ranking Republican, Arlen Specter, who too often helps carry the ACLU's water. They fret that the new guidelines may imperil civil liberties by permitting consideration of "race and ethnicity"—code for the unavoidable fact that investigators may notice that terrorists tend to be Muslims from Islamic countries. The Justice Department maintains that no one is suspected due to religion alone—any more than, say, being Italian by itself makes one a suspected Mafia criminal. But Mukasey has agreed to delay implementation so the committee can probe the guidelines at a hearing in mid-September. If we are attacked again, and the Leahys and Specters grandstand for the next 9/11 Commission, we hope Americans will remember who was trying to connect the dots and who was trying to obscure them.



ZUMA

■ Citing the recent drop in commodity prices, Ben Bernanke said that the Fed was not going to hike interest rates anytime soon. We think he is making a mistake. For one thing, he did not hike rates while commodity prices were soaring. The double standard suggests an inflationary bias. For another, prices have dropped much less than they previously rose. Money has been too loose for too long; more inflation is on the way; and the sooner we wring it back out of the economy, the less painful that process will be.

■ Another indicator for Bernanke to watch: Organized-crime groups are increasingly conducting their business in the euro, a Canadian report found. Perhaps gangster rappers will start wearing euro symbols around their necks.

■ Not many government operations function well, so it's worth noting the recent performance of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the low-key agency that insures most bank accounts up to $100,000. When Kansas's Columbian Bank and Trust Co. became the ninth American bank to fail this year, the FDIC smoothly did what it has done in the other cases: efficiently arrange for another bank to take over the insolvent bank's assets. Depositors were protected not only from loss, but from inconvenience: In most cases, checks could be written, ATM cards used, and business conducted as normal. Bank failures are not what they used to be, and neither is the FDIC. In the early 1990s, the agency had more than 23,000 employees; today it has fewer than 5,000. The FDIC's strength is its narrowness of focus. Unlike the implicit and undefined federal guarantee behind Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the FDIC's insurance of bank deposits is explicit and explicitly limited. With more than a hundred other institutions currently at risk of failure, the FDIC must be on guard against *folie de grandeur bureaucratique*—and remain more prudent than the banks it liquidates.

■ California's supreme court has ruled that the government may compel two doctors who declined to artificially insemi-

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THE WEEK...

nate an unmarried woman to do so, in contravention of their religious principles, which the court characterized as "incidental." The woman in question, Guadalupe Benitez, is a lesbian, and with her partner is currently raising a son conceived with the assistance of a different fertility clinic. The doctors say they refused to help the plaintiff become pregnant because she was unmarried; Miss Benitez's lawyers say it was because of her sexual orientation, making the refusal a violation of California's anti-discrimination law. Miss Benitez and her partner have suffered no loss—the treatment sought was readily available from other providers. The only point of this suit is to bring California's moral minority into conformity—adding to the surfeit of evidence that the culture wars will not end in a live-and-let-live truce.

■ Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki is saying that a new security agreement with the U.S. must contain an unconditional deadline of 2011 for the pullout of all our troops. If he really means it, this is very bad news. But it's always difficult to disentangle what is posturing from what is sincere when the Iraqis are negotiating. The Bush administration has insisted that any "time horizons" be conditional, based on the situation on the ground. If it is forced to give way, the future of Iraq will be seriously at risk. Not only are Iraqi forces not yet ready to operate on their own, but our troops remain the facilitators for nearly everything we want to happen in Iraq, from the expenditure of Iraqi-government money to political reconciliation. That the country is still in a fragile state could be seen in the news that the largely Shiite government has been cracking down on leaders of the Sons of Iraq, the security volunteers who represent a crucial Sunni turn away from the insurgency. There has been much to celebrate in Iraq recently. But much work remains, and it can't be foreshortened by arbitrary deadlines.

■ Obama and other Democrats who have pushed relentlessly for a pullout from Iraq, insisting on arbitrary timelines and heedless of the need to consolidate battlefield victories, should look hard at Somalia. In 2006, the Qaeda-affiliated Islamic Courts Union was seemingly routed by U.S.-backed Ethiopian forces. But although it was driven from major cities, the ICU was never fully defeated, and it regrouped in

The Rich, Soaked

If you listen to critics, George W. Bush's tax cuts have dramatically changed the fairness of the U.S. federal income tax: "The Bush tax cuts give those who earn over $1 million a tax cut nearly 160 times greater than that received by middle-income Americans." Such rhetoric suggests that a big share of the tax burden has been passed on to the little guy.

Proponents of the cuts, of course, support them not because they are a giveaway to the rich, but because lower marginal tax rates improve the overall working of the economy, enhancing the welfare of people at the top *and* the bottom. And there is a bonus for a revenue-hungry government: When tax rates are lower, individuals have more incentive to work and less incentive to avoid taxes. That explains why the revenue cost of reduced marginal rates is much smaller than the static scorers in Washington let on.

According to the negative (Obama) view, when Bush's tax cuts took effect, the share of income taxes paid by the wealthiest Americans should have declined. The rich, in this scenario, benefited from the senseless giveaway, putting a greater and greater proportion of the tax burden on the poor. Under the positive view, by contrast, the share of income taxes paid by the wealthiest Americans might increase even when you cut their tax rates, since they will work harder and reduce their efforts to avoid taxes.

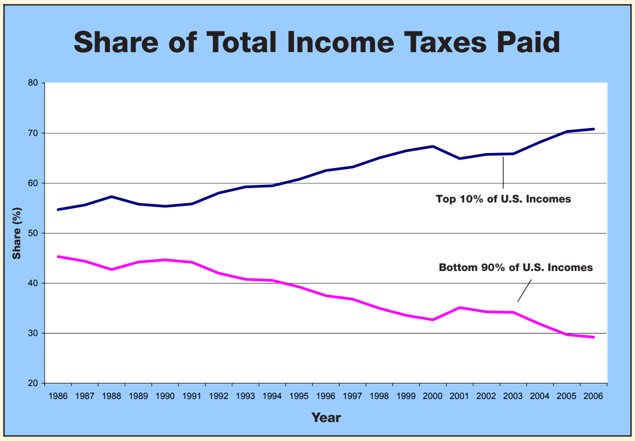
The nearby chart suggests that recent movements in the tax data are inconsistent with the negative Obama perspective.

The blue line indicates the share of income taxes paid by the top 10 percent of taxpayers. The pink line indicates the share of income taxes paid by the bottom 90 percent. In 2006, the top 10 percent of earners paid fully 70.8 percent of taxes. That is significantly above the 2000 peak of 67.3, before the Bush tax cut.

Yes, Obama might say, that is true, but only because the income share of the top earners has climbed so much. But Treasury Department data contradict this argument: The top 10 percent received about 46 percent of the income in 2000 and about 47.3 percent in 2006. The number may well have declined again after that. So the tax share of the rich has gone up a lot more since 2000 than their income share has.

Suppose there were a candidate for president who advocated a tax policy that dramatically reduced the share of income taxes paid by top earners. What would the progressives say about such a candidate? Well, anyone who suggests the repeal of the Bush tax cuts is just that fellow.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT



Share of Total Income Taxes Paid

SOURCE: IRS STATISTICS-OF-INCOME DIVISION

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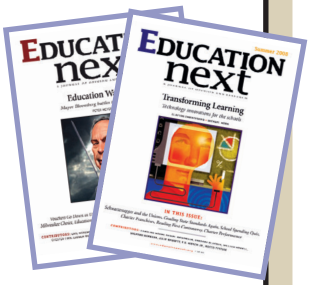

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—William G. Howell, Martin R. West, and Paul E. Peterson

The Early Education of Our Next President

Both candidates were mainly taught at home

Whether it is the image of Abraham Lincoln studying by log cabin candlelight or George Washington dutifully copying the *Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation* into his schoolboy notebooks, presidential schooling has long been a national fascination. Today we have a graduate of Columbia College and Harvard Law (Barack Obama) taking on a graduate of the Naval Academy and National War College (McCain) But it is the early schooling—how did they get there?—that is most fascinating.

—Peter Meyer

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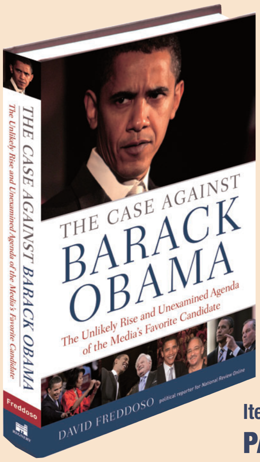

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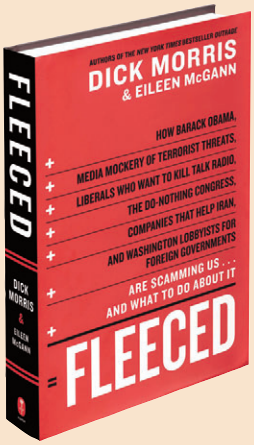

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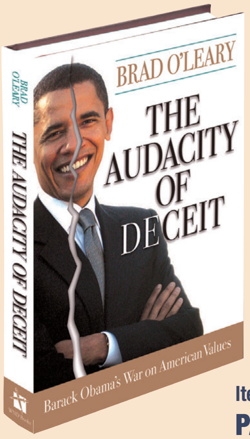

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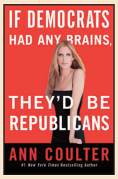

If Democrats Had Any Brains, They'd Be Republicans — Ann Coulter wallops Democrats with a full dose of unvarnished, unadulterated reality — as only she can deliver it. Witty, sharp-tongued, outrageous, and always faithfully conservative, here is Ann at her best, running circles around liberal pundits, pols, and Leftist wackos before they even know what has hit them.

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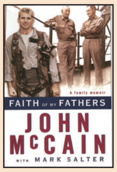

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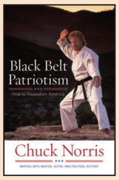

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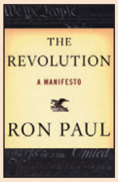

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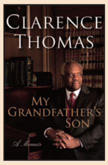

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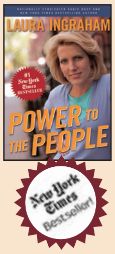

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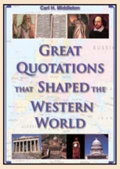

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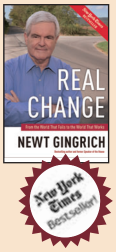

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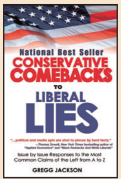

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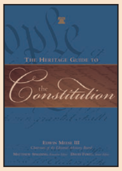

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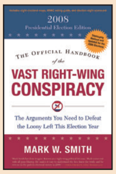

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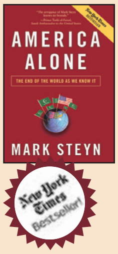

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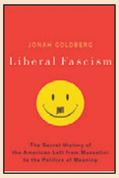

Liberal Fascism — "Fascists!" "Brownshirts!" "Jackbooted stormtroopers!" Such are the insults typically hurled at conservatives by their liberal opponents. But who are the real fascists in our midst? In *Liberal Fascism*, *National Review* columnist Jonah Goldberg shows that the original fascists were really on the left — and that liberals, from Woodrow Wilson to FDR to Hillary Clinton, have advocated policies and principles remarkably similar to those of Hitler and Mussolini.

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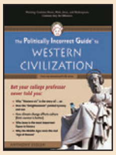

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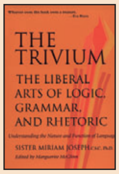

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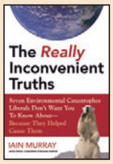

The Really Inconvenient Truths — The liberal environmental movement takes for granted that strict government regulation and public ownership is necessary for the preservation of the environment. In *The Really Inconvenient Truths*, Iain Murray of the Competitive Enterprise Institute reveals just how often and gravely liberal environmentalists have harmed the environment, how they have covered up this fact, and how conservatives can reclaim the environmental issue.

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THE WEEK...

remote areas to mount a vicious terrorist insurgency. Meanwhile, the Ethiopians gave way to the African Union, which, intimidated by jihadi attacks, never delivered on its promise of 8,000 peacekeepers—a force that would have been too paltry to keep the peace anyway. Having survived, the jihadis are now resurgent. They control swaths of Somalia and, in late August, seized Kismayo, the country's third-largest city. With the ICU setting its sights on the impotent central government in Mogadishu, al-Qaeda is now spreading its tentacles throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Factoring in radical hubs in the north, the continent is rife with safe havens from which to coordinate terrorist attacks against American and Western interests. Rolling the jihadis back will not be easy, especially if a premature pullout from Iraq invites a similar regression.

FAROOQ NAEEM/AFP

■ Pakistan is close to becoming an unwelcome novelty, a failed state with somewhere between 50 and 100 nuclear bombs. Suicide bombers wreak havoc in its streets. Whole parts of the country are a law unto themselves, tribal and Islamist in character. Something like 300,000 refugees are on the move to escape a sort of uncoordinated warfare. Pervez Musharraf, the president these last nine years, did little to sort out this chaos, instead adding to it. Claiming to restore democracy, Nawaz Sharif, a former prime minister, and Asif Ali Zardari, husband of the murdered Benazir Bhutto, formed a coalition government and forced Musharraf to resign. In reality, the two are engaged in a personal power struggle with no holds barred, and within days of Musharraf's resignation their coalition broke apart amid mutual accusations of lying and corruption. In other desperate moments in the country's history, the army has stepped in, just as Musharraf once did. Today its head, Gen. Ashfaq Kayani, says the army is steering clear of politics. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are campaigning more and more violently in the belief that they and they alone will be the ultimate winners.

■ Russia's invasion of Georgia was preceded by computerized attacks on Georgian Internet sites. The website of Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili was non-functional for more than 24 hours, and the National Bank of Georgia's site was defaced. Media, transport, and communication websites were also disrupted. The cyber attacks raise some interesting issues. The NATO charter, for example, declares that an attack against a member state is an attack against the whole alliance. Does that include cyber attacks? There are human-resources problems, too. Our own nation's defenses against such attacks are the proper province of the National Security Agency. In seeking the rare talented individuals capable of building these defenses, however, the NSA is limited to U.S. citizens and civil-service pay scales, while competitors like Yahoo and Google can cast their recruitment nets worldwide and engage in bidding battles for top talent. The age of cyber warfare is here. Is our government ready for it?

■ Before the Olympics, many observers—including members of the International Olympic Committee—speculated that the Games could spur China toward transparency and respect for human rights. We disagreed, and, alas, things went as we predicted. Some suspicious Chinese behavior was minor: A seven-year-old girl with buck teeth won a contest to sing an anthem live at the opening ceremony, but a nine-year-old deemed prettier ended up lip-synching to the younger girl's voice for the cameras. Television footage of the opening ceremony was digitally altered. The gymnastics team produced passports to justify the participation of implausibly short, light, young-looking girls—Chinese websites had previously identified two, one of whom was inexplicably missing a tooth, as too young to compete. But other offenses were graver: The government required permits for people to protest, and then arrested some of those who applied. Not one application resulted in a protest. Before the Games, the government stopped the domestic media from reporting unflattering stories, and ignored death threats against foreign correspondents. During the Games, some Internet sites were blocked. Human Rights Watch has gone so far as to call the Olympics a "Great Leap Backward" for China. This might be an overstatement, but the event certainly didn't move the country forward.

■ Ticking away in the red-brick row houses of Britain's old industrial cities are thousands of young Islamists. According to MI5, the nation's security agency, the current threat level is "severe," meaning there is "a high likelihood of future terrorist attacks." It is some slight relief to learn that British police have arrested three men thought to be associated with death threats to British political leaders, "especially Tony Blair and Gordon Brown," posted on a jihadi website in January. The posting offered a truce to the British government in return for complete withdrawal of British troops from Afghanistan and Iraq, and the release of jihadi inmates from British jails. Two of the men were arrested at Manchester airport en route to Scandinavia, where there is thought to be a growing jihadi network. Perhaps the Brits should reconsider their policies on immigration and assimilation.

■ When Ali Kordan was nominated to run Iran's interior ministry, he capped off his list of qualifications by producing an honorary doctorate of laws from Oxford University. A quick inspection of the document raised doubts about its legitimacy; spelling and punctuation errors abounded, and the text seemed to have been composed by a writer of Chinese menus. Oxford denied that Kordan had ever been a student, but a ministry spokesman pronounced his diploma authentic, presumably after consulting Dan Rather. Still, questions persist, and some legislators have called for Kordan's resignation. We find these demands out of place.

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THE WEEK...

After all, according to a news story, "the Interior Ministry runs the country's police and oversees elections"—and in Iran, a fake law degree is especially appropriate for someone carrying out those functions.

■ In its latest rankings, *U.S. News & World Report* lists George Mason University first in the new category of Up-and-Coming National Universities. The ranking, based on peer assessments from other high-profile universities, underscores the reputation of GMU's stellar economics and law programs, which attract elite conservative thinkers from across the nation. Law and economics go hand in hand at George Mason, where free markets are paramount. If a conservative-leaning university can top a *USN&WR* ranking, maybe there's hope for higher education after all.

■ A group of college presidents calling themselves the Amethyst Initiative wants to lower the drinking age from 21 to 18. Our Ramesh Ponnuru had the best response: "College presidents want a lower drinking age . . . but it is probably still a good idea." Wait, though—their website doesn't say they actually want to lower it; instead, they seek "to support an informed and dispassionate public debate," "invite new ideas," and play "a vigorous, constructive role as these critical discussions unfold." The goal is "to consider policies that will effectively empower young adults." There are good arguments for lowering the drinking age, but leave it to our college presidents to swaddle the idea in consensus-speak and social-engineering jargon.

■ Kerri Walsh, American gold medalist in beach volleyball, had a post-victory message for George W. Bush. "Mr. President, we thank you. Thank you for your inspiration, and for all you do." History's verdict on the Bush years will be more nuanced, but if we had to pick a bumper sticker, we'd bet Walsh's will be more accurate than MoveOn.org's.

■ Madonna, intuiting that the display of her cadaverous gams in fishnet stockings is no longer sufficient to rustle up media attention and the illusion of cultural relevance that attends it, has set upon John McCain. During a recent performance by the chlorine chorine, McCain's photograph was juxtaposed with images of Adolf Hitler and Zimbabwean tyrant Robert Mugabe. Barack Obama's mug, in contrast, was appropriately included in a series with John Lennon, Al Gore, and Gandhi, three global celebrities who sought to transcend traditional politics while offering sometimes-loopy policy prescriptions. McCain responded to Madonna with justified outrage, but he does himself no favors in condescending to notice an episode that is unquestionably *infra* the presidential *dig*. We note that the photo montage took place during the performance of a song called "Get Stupid." Mission accomplished, Madge, mission accomplished.

■ The actor Jon Voight wrote an op-ed criticizing Obama. His fellow thespian Roseanne Barr, an Obama supporter, responded on her website by calling Voight "a frightened little girl in a pink ballet tutu," a "bitch," and a racist, hinting at nefarious Jewish influences, and likening him to a feminine-hygiene product at the end of its useful life. Then she got nasty. Invoking "your evil spawn Angelina Jolie and her vacuous hubby Brad Pitt" (Jolie is Voight's daughter), she called the recent parents hypocrites destined to "spit out more dunces" and then rattled off a long Daily Kos–style auto-rant about the military-industrial-petrocapitalist complex. Miss Barr became famous playing a salt-of-the-earth Illinois factory worker on television, and if America's blue-collar types actually talked and thought like the real-life Roseanne, her favored candidate would win by a landslide. They seem much more likely to continue clinging to their reactionary, outdated notions of politeness, not to mention their sanity.

■ A cautionary tale of justice at work comes from the mean streets of Grafton, Wisc., where Heidi Dalibor was recently arrested for not returning a pair of library books. (For the benefit of future true-crime novelists, the books were *Angels and Demons* and *White Oleander*.) Dalibor ignored the library's four notices, two phone calls, and two letters. "I said, what could they possibly do? They can't arrest me for this. . . . I was wrong." Wrong indeed—when the library didn't hear from Dalibor, it took the matter to the police department, which issued a citation that included a court date. Dalibor ignored that too. When policemen showed up at her door with handcuffs and drove her to the station for a mug shot, some critics claimed that the cops were going too far. But as police chief Charles Wenten points out, "None of this would have been necessary if she followed the agreement and returned the books." Dalibor has been released from custody after paying $170 in fines, but she still refuses to return the books: "They're paid for now," she claims.

■ William Shanahan, debate coach at Fort Hays State University (Kansas), got into an argument at a debate tournament in Wichita last spring, during which he shouted and dropped his pants. When a clip surfaced recently on YouTube, he became the *former* debate coach at Fort Hays State. Which leads one to wonder, what was he teaching his charges, and how might debaters of the past have benefited from his techniques? "How long, Catiline, will you jerk us around?" "If this be treason, kiss it." "Liberty *and* Union, now and for ever, one and inseparable!"—demonstrated with a digital gesture.

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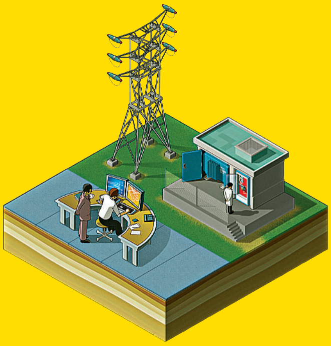

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THE WEEK...

■ "The glories of our blood and state / Are shadows, not substantial things; / There is no armour against fate; / Death lays his icy hand on kings." Death and his many helpers, including dementia. In a forthcoming memoir, Lady Thatcher's daughter Carol writes that her formidable mother has been suffering from memory loss since 2000. So they leave the stage, the heroes and the heroine of the last century. James Shirley's stern poem ends with this thought: "Only the actions of the just / Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust."

■ In systems that lack settled procedures for leadership succession, it sometimes happens that while the alpha males wrestle grimly among themselves for supremacy, a complete mediocrity rises to brief prominence: a Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, a Richard Cromwell, a Georgy Malenkov. Such a one was Hua Guofeng, who died on August 20, aged 87, having briefly been China's paramount leader 30 years previously. By the time of Chou En-lai's death in January 1976, Mao had so thoroughly purged China's leadership of anyone with character that the nondescript Hua was appointed Chou's successor as premier. When Mao himself died a few months later, Hua also became chairman of the Communist party, thus in theory holding supreme power. An unswerving Maoist, the colorless Hua promulgated a policy tellingly named "The Two Whatevers," urging obedience to whatever Mao had decided or instructed. By this point, however, the Chinese had had enough of undiluted Maoism. Hua was soon outmaneuvered by Deng Xiaoping. Shunted off to a sinecure, he died in bed. The people of China might be forgiven for reacting to that news in the spirit of his doctrine: Whatever.

THE WORLD

Russia's New Cold War

Russia's onslaught against Georgia is a challenge to the West. Georgia has performed the successful experiment of transforming itself from a backward and corrupt Soviet republic into a democracy. Its president, Mikhail Saakashvili, and its people have aligned themselves enthusiastically with the West.

Russian forces are now in the process of breaking up this fledgling democracy. The small Georgian army has been cut to pieces, and some 100,000 civilians have fled as their homes have been looted and burnt down. Local computer networks, bridges, and ports, and apparently even the pipeline to Turkey, have been targeted. The physical damage takes place within a context of brazen mendacity. Russia signed an agreement to withdraw its troops, but units instead remained inside Georgia with the Orwellian pretense that invasion is peacekeeping. Spokesmen, including the colonel-general who is deputy chief of staff, make it clear that they would like nothing better than to smash Georgia to the ground in the way they recently smashed Chechnya. The Russian parliament has meanwhile voted with quasi-totalitarian unanimity that Pres. Dmitri Medvedev may dispose as he sees fit of the disputed provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, whose separatist independence he has now endorsed. The Russians are playing fast and loose with the territorial integrity of Georgia.

It might all have been very different if Georgia had obtained the NATO membership that it sought, and that President Bush was proposing. But at a NATO summit in April, Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, persuaded the alliance not to take this step. Once Russian troops began their blitzkrieg, the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, hastened to Moscow to sign an agreement that did not guarantee either genuine Russian withdrawal or Georgian territorial integrity. That was the second diplomatic error.

The White House is cutting back on various projects of cooperation with Russia, and suggestions are in the air that Russia should be thrown out of the G8 and prevented from joining the World Trade Organization. The Europeans—France well in the lead—are against sanctions or any measure of exclusion that might make Russia pay for its brutality. To wallow in weakness is a third diplomatic error. President Medvedev openly mocks the West for its impotence, saying that Russia is happy to be locked out of international institutions and would not mind breaking off relations altogether.

President Medvedev openly mocks the West for its impotence, saying that Russia is happy to be locked out of international institutions and would not mind breaking off relations altogether.

In New Europe, where the memory of Russian occupation and repression remains raw, the threat is widely recognized. Ukraine has a post-Soviet agreement that Russia's Black Sea fleet may use the port of Sevastopol until 2017. Russian officials declare that this is a vital interest that they will never give up. There is every sign that they plan to exploit the Russian minority in Ukraine to provoke another separatist crisis on the Georgian model. The presidents of Ukraine, Poland, and the three Baltic republics flew to Georgia in a display of democratic solidarity. Poland is preparing to install American bases for a missile shield, and the Czech Republic will have a linked radar system. Ratcheting up the tension, Russia's military has announced that it will consequently be targeting nuclear missiles on Poland and Ukraine.

So be it. The interceptors will be in place shortly. Joint military exercises might be planned in New Europe. What happens next over Georgia will influence China's stance toward Taiwan, the aggressiveness of Iran and North Korea, and much else in current trouble spots.

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2008

The Denver Democrats

THE Democratic party, the older of our two major parties, has a history in which it can take some pride. It led the nation to victory in World War II, and rallied it to fight the Soviet Union in the years immediately after. It pushed for liberalized trade for decades. It attempted, with varying degrees of success, to protect the underdog.

But the Democratic party that has just nominated Barack Obama and Joseph Biden is one that many of its forebears would hardly recognize, and might abhor. The determination to face down our enemies that characterized Harry Truman; the willingness to cut tax rates that John F. Kennedy showed; the pro-life convictions that informed Hubert Humphrey and Ed Muskie; even the free-trading instincts that Bill Clinton possessed—all have been banished from today's party.

In place of these older political strains are now a restless welfare statism; a hope, masquerading as a strategy, that we can talk and charm our way out of foreign crises; and a social liberalism that prefers the courts to do its heavy lifting. This party has found perfect exemplars of this ideology in its nominees.

The most enthusiastic members of the Denver party believe that the country is finally, for the first time really, on their side. The nation's (and the party's) Left is both enlarged and inflamed. The shrewder ones, who are calling the shots, hope the public will be sufficiently disaffected with the Republicans to tolerate or overlook the Democrats' ideology.

Thus the task before Obama and Biden during this campaign is threefold. They must feign toughness on foreign policy and moderation on values. At the same time, they must present their enthusiasm for bureaucracy as sympathy for the economic challenges of the middle class. And they must persuade the country that they are not what they are: the most left-wing ticket their party has run in 36 years. You can't fool all of the people all of the time. Let's see if 51 percent this time is feasible.

2008 II

Candidate of Caution

WHEN it came to choosing a running mate, Barack Obama turned out to be one of those experience-conscious "3 A.M." voters who tended to support Hillary Clinton in the primaries. He went with the longest-serving senator with the most foreign-policy experience he could find, Joe Biden, who has been marinating in the Senate for no less than 35 years.

There is something to be said for Obama's selecting a running mate who knows Washington well enough that he might be able to help Obama govern (although, just like Obama, he has no significant executive experience). But Biden runs counter to all of Obama's justifications for his candidacy. If opposing the Iraq War from the outset was the most important test of judgment in a potential commander-in-chief, Biden failed it, voting for the war (however reluctantly). If commitment to "change" is measured by how little time one has spent in Washington, Biden must be a confirmed agent of that status quo. If the "new politics" is characterized by rising above negativity, Biden firmly represents the old politics, since Obama picked him partly because he can be trusted to be a zealous attack dog.

Will Biden help politically? It is said that he will appeal to working-class voters, given his downscale family background. But this is a stretch. Three decades in the Senate is enough to blunt anyone's everyman appeal, and Biden long ago mastered the art of senatorial pomposity. It is said he could help in Pennsylvania, where he has roots. But Obama is supposed to be expanding the electoral map, not working to hold what recently have been reliably Democratic states.

On the campaign trail, Biden will be an energetic and vivid campaigner, happy to assail John McCain, as he proved at his first event with Obama in Springfield, Ill. Yet this trait, too, comes with a downside. Biden famously loves to hear himself talk, a romance stoked by his long tenure in Washington. This logorrhea has made him a constant fount of gaffes and self-parodic monologues. There is charm under the rhetorical bloat, but people could be forgiven for missing it.

As for the substance, Biden is a typical liberal. He is pro-choice, having suppressed in the 1990s whatever pro-life tendencies he once had. He has opposed—often in cringe-makingly buffoonish performances—constitutionalist nominees to the Supreme Court. His vaunted foreign-policy judgment is seriously flawed. Although he was not as irresponsible as the Democrats who called for an immediate pullout from Iraq, he opposed the surge and plugged for an unworkable plan to partition the country.

The cardinal rule of vice-presidential picks is: Do no harm. It remains to be seen whether Biden will meet even this low standard.

Thank You

In our June 2 issue, we informed readers that the family of Staff Sgt. Ronald Blystone, a 34-year-old Bronze Star recipient who appeared on the cover of NR and later died for our country in Iraq, had set up an educational fund for his three children. We invited readers to contribute to it (Blystone Educational Fund, BanCorp South, P.O. Box 4023, Springfield, Mo. 65808). On August 26, we received the following letter from his widow:

> The Blystone Family wishes to express their deep gratitude for the donations to the Blystone Educational Fund. With these donations you have helped SSG R.C. Blystone reach one of two of his goals: to provide further education for his three children. The other goal, he reached himself: It was to be one of the best NCOs in the Army by always taking care of his men and bringing them all home safe. Thank you, and may God bless you.
>
> Sincerely,
> Kelly Blystone

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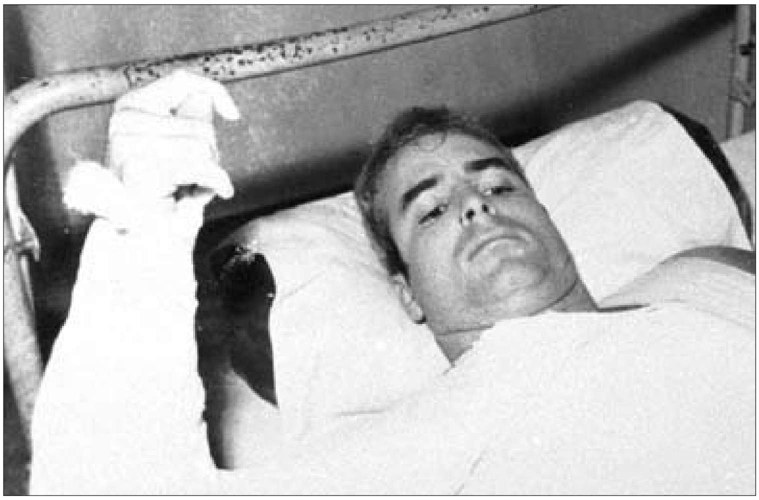

AP

■ PEOPLE ■

‘The Most Gut-Wrenching Decision’

How John McCain became a hero

JOHN J. MILLER

On October 26, 1967, on his 23rd bombing raid over North Vietnam, John McCain was “killed.”

That’s what naval aviators, in their slang, called getting shot down. For a while, McCain’s family feared he really was dead. His father, an admiral, heard through back channels that two planes had been lost and that there probably weren’t any survivors.

But in the nick of time, McCain had pulled the ejection-seat handle of his A-4 Skyhawk and plummeted into Truc Bach Lake, near the center of Hanoi. The North Vietnamese soon announced that they had captured a man they described as “the fallen air pirate.”

So began McCain’s 65-month ordeal as a prisoner of war. He would endure torture, malnutrition, solitary confinement, and permanent injury. Photos taken around the time of his capture show a guy who looks his 31 years, with perhaps a little premature gray on the top of his head. Pictures taken around the time of his release, in 1973, show someone who appears to have aged much more than five and a half years. McCain had become the “white-haired dude.”

The story didn’t have to play out that way. After eight months in captivity, the North Vietnamese dangled an early-release offer in front of McCain. They understood the propaganda value of granting freedom to the son of an admiral who was soon to command U.S. forces in the Pacific. On August 16, during the candidate forum at Saddleback Church, Rick Warren asked McCain to identify “the most gut-wrenching decision you’ve ever had to make.” McCain replied that it was his choice to refuse the deal: “The high-ranking officer who offered it slammed the door and the interrogator said, ‘Go back to your cell. It’s going to be very tough on you now.’”

McCain went on to suffer terribly, as did hundreds of other POWs. In his 1999 memoir, *Faith of My Fathers*, the future GOP presidential nominee called the option of early release “powerfully tempting.” What gave him the strength to say no?

When McCain splashed into Truc Bach Lake, he probably would have drowned if the Vietnamese hadn’t pulled him out. During the violent ejection from his Skyhawk, McCain had broken a leg at the knee and both of his arms. He was certainly in no shape to swim. On the shore, a mob kicked him and stabbed him with a bayonet. Then he was sent to prison, where soldiers beat him more. They might have let him die but for a discovery. “Your father is a big admiral,” said one of his captors. “Now we take you to the hospital.” The conditions were filthy and primitive. A guard ate most of his food. A surgeon botched an operation on his leg.

After about six weeks, McCain was transferred to a prison camp. Still ailing, he wore a chest cast and lay in a stretcher. He was put in a cell with Bud Day and Norris Overly, a pair of Air Force officers. “I thought he was going to die,” says Day, a Medal of Honor recipient. “He had lost so much weight that the cast was too big for him—his body rattled around in it like a rock in a can.” McCain credits Day and Overly with saving his life.

Overly, however, had more on his mind than nursing McCain. He was deep in talks with the North Vietnamese about accepting an early release. This would have been a clear violation of the Code of Conduct for American Prisoners of War, which ordered prisoners to refuse special favors. That included accepting a release before that of another American who had been held longer. The North Vietnamese had been holding Everett Alvarez Jr., a Navy pilot, since 1964. He should have been first in line.

For a while, Overly kept Day and McCain in the dark about his negotiations. When he finally told them, Day urged Overly to back out, citing the Code of Conduct. McCain, too, thought Overly was making a mistake, but he was less insistent than Day. “I thought too well of him, and owed him too much to stand between him and his freedom,” wrote McCain in *Faith of My Fathers*. On February 16, 1968, the North Vietnamese released Overly and two other POWs.

Those who stayed behind fiercely resented the men who broke the Code of Conduct. To this day, NAM-POWs, an organization of former U.S. prisoners of war in Vietnam, bans Overly and ten others from its rolls on the grounds that they betrayed their fellow prisoners by leaving out of turn.

In the prison, reports of comings and goings spread through the now-famous tap code, a simple cipher that allowed POWs to communicate covertly. Through a series of taps, the men spelled out words and traded information. They took a special interest in new arrivals. "When we learned a new name, we always told the Vietnamese about it," says Leo Thorsness, another Medal of Honor recipient. "We figured that if they knew that we knew, the odds of their keeping a new guy alive were better."

Relaying this information came with a price, however. Because communicating with other prisoners was forbidden, the American who passed the word to the Vietnamese could expect a beating. So they took turns doing it. "I don't know a better way of creating loyalty—it's like the cohesion you develop in combat, and a continuation of it," says Thorsness.

For many prisoners—including McCain, when he was put in solitary confinement following Overly's release—the tap code was virtually the only form of contact with other Americans. "Communicating not only affirmed our humanity," wrote McCain. "It kept us alive."

In the spring of 1968, prior to receiving that early-release offer, McCain sensed correctly that his captors were treating him with leniency. The North Vietnamese viewed McCain as a kind of "crown prince" because of his father's high rank. They believed that granting him amnesty would demoralize Americans everywhere, including POWs who resisted interrogation.

In June, they brought McCain to a special room with upholstered chairs and a table with tea, cookies, and cigarettes. After about two hours of conversation, the prison's commander made the offer: "Do you want to go home?"

McCain didn't refuse immediately. He knew about the code. He knew that the North Vietnamese probably would demand that he make some kind of statement. But he also knew that he was in poor health—he had not recovered from his crash, remained badly underweight, and was plagued with dysentery. Would he even survive if he didn't receive proper medical treatment from American doctors?

The North Vietnamese officer told McCain to go back to his cell and think it over.

Through the tap code, McCain raised Bob Craner, an Air Force major in the next cell. Craner encouraged McCain to accept the deal, in the belief that the seriously injured weren't bound by the Code of Conduct. Not everybody held this view. Bud Day, who had been moved to another camp by the time McCain received the offer, thinks that this would have been improper. "You just knew that you didn't go home when other people were still in prison," he says.

At the Naval Academy, McCain hadn't exactly been known for following the rules. He once said that by the end of his second year, he had "marched enough extra duty to take me to Baltimore and back 17 times." In captivity, however, he had a lot of time to reflect upon his experience at Annapolis. "I regretted the foolishness that had characterized my youth," he wrote in *Faith of My Fathers*. "I regretted that I hadn't worked harder at the Academy, believing that had I done so, I might have been better prepared for the trial" of captivity.

In prison, McCain perhaps realized that he could still fight the system—the North Vietnamese one. He became a loudmouthed cripple, hollering insults at guards who couldn't understand English. McCain biographer Robert Timberg described it this way: "His antagonism had a macabre looniness to it, like the game but overmatched Black Knight in the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Squirming in the dirt, all four limbs lopped off, the Knight shouts after his departing adversary, 'Oh, oh, I see. Running away, eh. You yellow bastard!'"

A few days after making the early-release offer, the prison-camp commander summoned McCain again. "What is your answer?"

McCain said no. He didn't want to hand the Communists a propaganda victory. He didn't want to let down the other prisoners. He didn't want to embarrass his father. He didn't want to break the Code of Conduct. Despite his poor health, he believed he could hang on and survive.

The commander was furious. He stood up, knocked over a chair, and sputtered: "They taught you too well, Mac Kane. They taught you too well."

The worst part of McCain's captivity was about to begin. **NR**

■ **AT WAR**

Warrior for The Surge

Ahead of almost everyone, John McCain knew how to win in Iraq

RICHARD LOWRY

NEARLY everything you need to know about the logic of the surge in Iraq and the reasons for its success can be found in a speech John McCain gave to the Council on Foreign Relations in November 2003.

McCain called for the addition of another full division of troops in Iraq, enough to give us "the necessary manpower to conduct a focused counterinsurgency campaign across the Sunni Triangle that seals off enemy operating areas, conducts search-and-destroy operations, and holds territory." McCain argued that "security is a precondition for everything else we want to accomplish in Iraq"—without it, intelligence tips from the Iraqi public would be nonexistent, economic progress would be stymied, and political progress would be difficult.

It wasn't until the end of 2006 that the insights McCain had expressed years earlier became the basis of our strategy in Iraq. How did McCain understand what was needed in Iraq before President Bush, who had staked so much on the war, before other supporters of the war, who were just as zealous for victory, before the secretary of defense, who made so much of constantly questioning assumptions, and before many of the generals in charge, who were on the ground dealing with the war every day?

The answer has to do with McCain's military experience, his judgment, and his political style and temperament.

He traveled to Iraq shortly after the war began. In Baghdad, he heard from U.S. commanders that everything was going fine. Then he traveled to Basra, where a British colonel told McCain that they would never meet again and that McCain had no control over whether he'd be

On the ground in Iraq, August 2003

MANISH SWARUP/AP

promoted—so he might as well tell the truth. He told McCain the situation was perilous and about to explode into a full-fledged insurgency because the coalition lacked enough troops.

Fred Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute—an intellectual architect of the surge—says practically anyone who was interested in hearing the truth in Iraq had similar encounters. “A lot of people had that experience,” he says. “You could always find people to tell you things were going badly. The question was whether you ignored it, or pursued it and started making public statements.”

With McCain, it was emphatically the latter. As Joseph Curl documents in a long report for the *Washington Times* on McCain and the surge, the senator began warning that we needed more troops as soon as he got back. McCain’s famous maverick tendencies served him well; he was willing to break with his fellow Republicans when they were in lockstep behind the notion that the war was on track and were lining up dutifully behind Don Rumsfeld. “McCain was willing to be disloyal to his party,” says Kagan.

McCain’s military service equipped him to see the situation in Iraq more clearly than other politicians could. He knew people down the chain of command, so wasn’t dependent on PowerPoint presentations from generals in the Green Zone. When he got those briefings, he understood the language in which generals were talking and could see through flimsy explanations and dodgy answers. As speechwriter Mark Salter says, “McCain has an innate BS detector, especially for military matters.” It had plenty of cause to be active. Salter says of the dubious official briefings from the military for much of the war, “Pre-surge, McCain was appalled—it was the 5 o’clock follies.”

McCain wasn’t particularly expert in counterinsurgency. He had experienced the Vietnam War from the air and then in a prison. Once back in the United States, though, he attended the National War College and studied what had happened in the war that he had missed. He knew about the different approaches of Gen. William Westmoreland, who treated Vietnam as a conventional war and thought he could hunt down and destroy the Viet Cong in a big battle, and Gen. Creighton Abrams, who realized the importance of securing the population and favored classic counterinsurgency tactics. When Abrams took over from Westmoreland, the war began to turn, but it was too late.

In his latest book, *Hard Call: The Art of Great Decisions*, written with Salter, McCain profiles one of the dissenters from Westmoreland’s strategy in Vietnam, Gen. Fred Weyand. McCain writes that Weyand, who as a former intelligence officer had a keen sense of the enemy’s intentions, realized that “the key to success in Vietnam was securing and pacifying the towns and villages of South Vietnam.” He worried “that Westmoreland was letting his own preferences for how he wanted to wage war blind him to evidence of how the enemy planned to wage it.” Sound familiar?

The episode McCain focuses on is Weyand’s convincing a reluctant Westmoreland to let him redeploy troops from near the Cambodian border—to which the North Vietnamese hoped to lure us, and where Westmoreland sought his elusive decisive battle—back closer to Saigon right before the Tet Offensive. Weyand’s move helped make Tet a military catastrophe for the Viet Cong. It’s not hard to see what McCain admires in Weyand, a clear-eyed realist and lonely voice of dissent.

From his knowledge of military history, McCain knew of past successful and unsuccessful counterinsurgency campaigns. So he didn’t just call for more troops, but understood how they should be used to deny insurgents the population’s support. In a November 2005 speech at the American Enterprise Institute that stands up remarkably well, he said, “Rather than focusing on killing and capturing insurgents, we should emphasize protecting the local population, creating secure areas where insurgents find it difficult to operate.”

McCain was plugged in to the debate within the military, roughly between the camps of Gens. David Petraeus and George Casey (who preceded Petraeus as commander in Iraq). The Petraeus camp argued that more troops, properly deployed, could change the situation on the ground, while the Casey camp believed that more troops might make the situation worse by alienating Iraqis. McCain knew of then–Col. H. R. McMaster’s success in Tal Afar in 2005, in a counterinsurgency campaign that was a kind of precursor to the surge, and he publicly cited the experience of Fallujah, which U.S. troops successfully cleared and held.

All of this was reinforced by several tendencies in McCain’s style and temperament. Part of him is still the rebel of Naval Academy days. He enjoys nothing more than railing against a corrupt, out-of-touch, or ineffectual establishment, whether it’s military or civilian.

McCain is comfortable with delivering hard truths, indeed considers it part of

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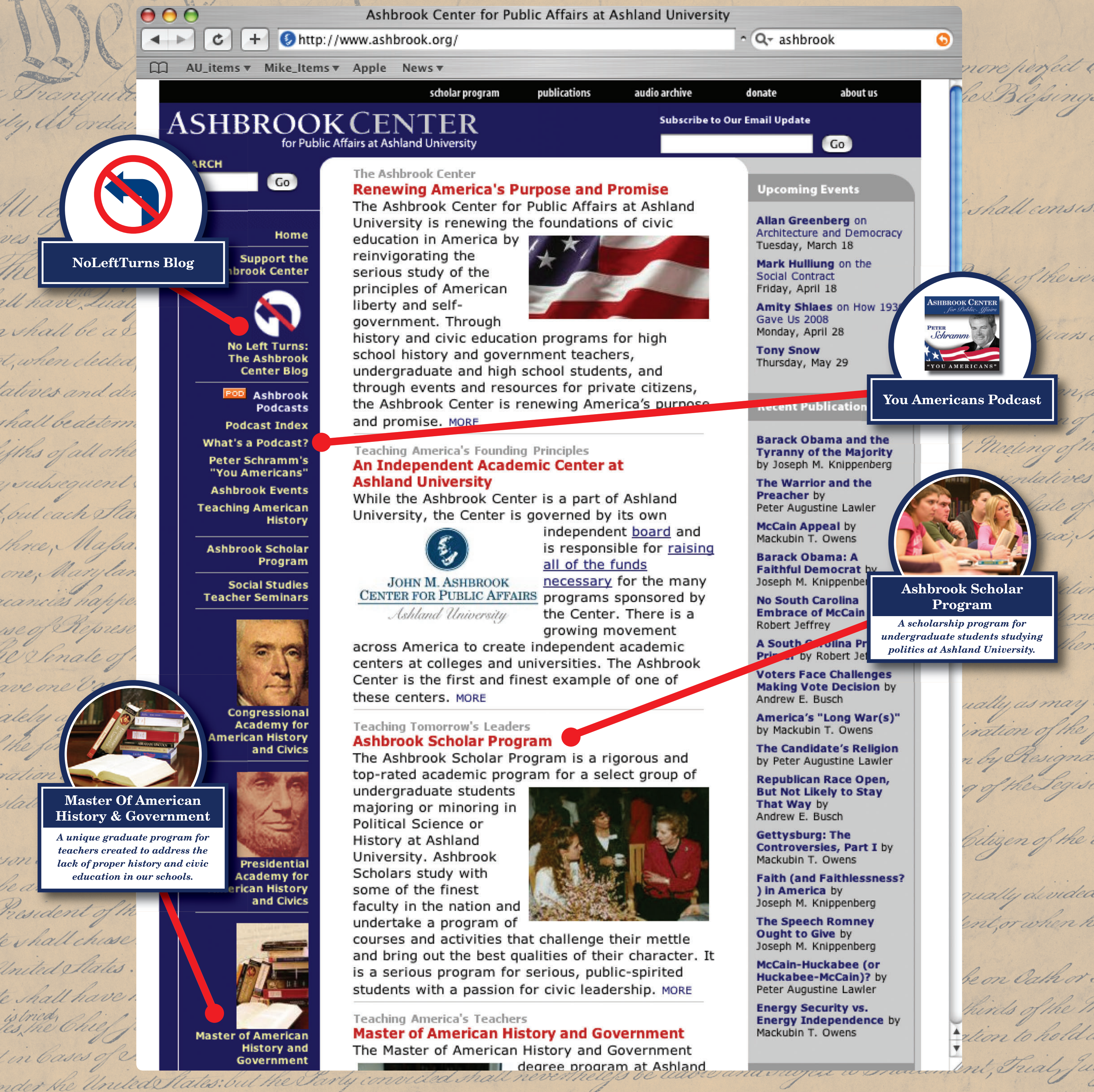
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his duty as a leader. Characteristically, he called in 2005 for "avoiding rosy aspirations for near-term improvements in Iraq's politics or security situation, and more accurately portraying events on the ground, even if they are negative." He didn't flinch from the consequences of his policy, saying it "will require more troops and money. It will take time, probably years, and mean more American casualties."

Finally, the Jacksonian side of him simply wants to win the nation's wars. Nothing else—his party, his political ambitions, nothing—was as important as that.

After the 2006 elections, the dam broke. Bush cashiered Rumsfeld and realized he needed a new approach in Iraq. McCain lobbied the Bush administration for the surge and worked with its proponents in the military and its supporters among civilian military analysts. Bush ordered the surge, and when it dramatically changed conditions on the ground for the better, what McCain had been saying since 2003 was vindicated. **NR**

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RUSSIA

Cold War II

It isn't just Georgia that's in danger

DAVID PRYCE-JONES

THE Russian invasion of Georgia is an ominous portent. Georgia is too small a state to be a threat to Russia, and the composition of its government is of only marginal importance to the Kremlin. Yet here are Dmitri Medvedev, the Russian president, and his Siamese twin Vladimir Putin, the prime minister, raging against Georgia in wild language and crushing it with even wilder action. The Russian national interest, as they understand it, evidently is promoted by the display of brutality. This marks a shift in the world order—and, seemingly, a reprise of the Cold War.

The provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia—hitherto integral parts of Georgia—are under Russian military occupation, their previous Georgian inhabitants expelled. The stage is set by Moscow for the annexation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to Russia proper. The Russian ambassador to the United Nations says the territorial integrity of Georgia has become "a very thorny issue." Sergei Lavrov, the foreign minister, is less delicate: "The world can forget about any talk of Georgia's territorial integrity."

Abkhazia and South Ossetia are pinpricks on the map. Their populations, part Christian and part Muslim, number a few hundred thousand in the jumble of minorities that make the Caucasus a tinderbox of nationalisms. The collapse of the Soviet Union encouraged separatist movements in both provinces—national aspirations that are pure fantasy, given the circumstances. Fighting broke out in the 1990s, and Russian troops moved in to bring about a standoff with Georgia, or what the jargon calls a "frozen conflict." Given a minimum of good faith, this was open to resolution. Instead, the Kremlin began to hand out citizenship to the populations, Russifying the provinces. Georgia then carried through the democratic revolution led by Mikhail Saakashvili. As the new president, he freed the economy, cracked down on corruption, welcomed American and Israeli advisers, and applied to join NATO. When he also tried to reestablish government over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Kremlin decided to put a stop to Georgia and Saakashvili, and to their democracy.

Putin and Medvedev are reproducing Soviet strategy and tactics faithfully. As before, aggression is masked as peacekeeping. Victims of the Soviets used to be blackened as Nazis or counterrevolutionaries; the up-to-date version is that Georgia is guilty of ethnic cleansing and genocide. "Attack our citizens and Russia will shatter you," Medvedev declared, calling to mind many a Communist boss before him. Ceasefire agreements have been signed, and peace conditions publicized, but the Kremlin has no intention of respecting any of these. Mendacity is standard. Khrushchev lied that Soviet forces were withdrawing from Budapest at the end of October 1956, the very moment when they were advancing into the city, and his successors told similar lies when launching the invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan. The propaganda remains as absurd as ever. Vesti FM, an outlet of Russian state radio, has been broadcasting that Vice President Cheney set these events in motion in order to prevent the election of Senator Obama. (And spare a thought for the great poet Osip Mandelstam, who lost his life for writing, "Every killing is a treat / For the broad-chested Ossete"—Stalin was thought to have Ossetian blood.)

The Politburo of old professed an ideology, though it is doubtful whether cynics of their rank could have believed that Marxism was the key to possession of the rest of the world. Stalin and his colleagues were primarily Russian nationalists for whom the Red Army was the source of power and expansion. They were aware that an immense military and a secret-police apparatus were indispensable if so many reluctant people at home and abroad were to be held down. Violence was instrumental, to be deployed when convenient. The ideology is gone, but the ambitions it cloaked remain.

Did Mikhail Gorbachev, the last general secretary of the Communist party, really understand that violence was integral to the ideology? His reforms opened the way for the oppressed millions to take political

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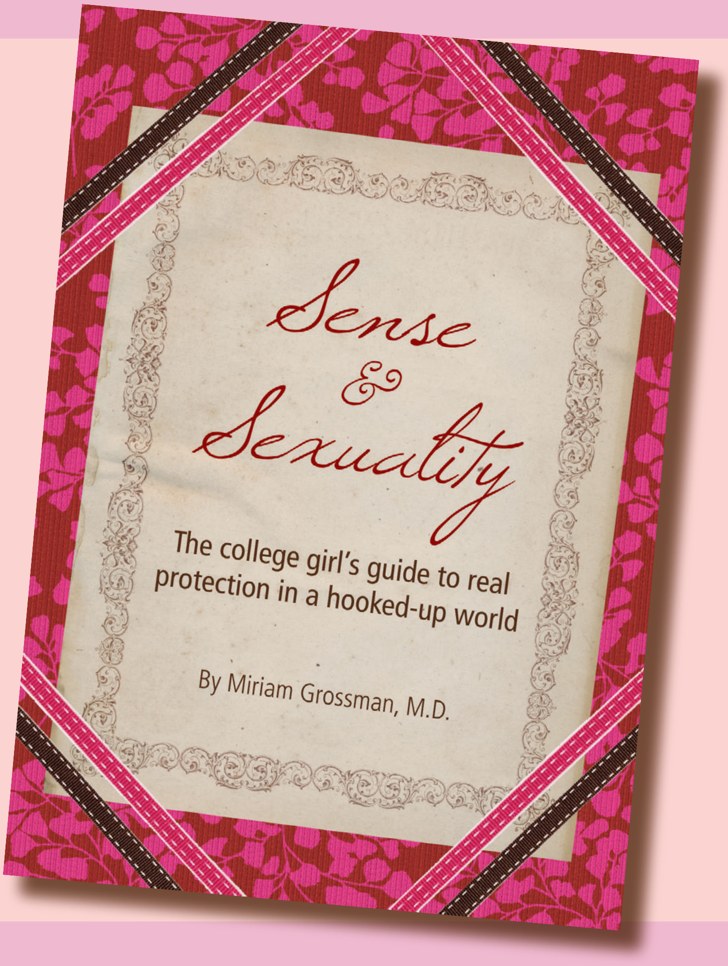

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initiatives on their own behalf. The countries of the Soviet bloc, the non-Russian republics and the autonomous areas of the Soviet Union, seethed with nationalist resentment of Russian domination. All over that empire, regional party and ideological secretaries were soon losing control, and in their panic they urged Gorbachev to declare martial law and move the tanks in to restore the status quo. In exceptional instances in Riga, and—especially painful now in retrospect—in Tbilisi, Gorbachev did resort to force, but not on a scale sufficient to restore real fear of the Russians, and therefore compliance. Gorbachev likes to claim that he was too high-minded to order the spilling of blood. It's more realistic to say he was naïve, unable to grasp either the true nature of Communist ideology or how hatred of the Russians had fueled implacable regional nationalisms. The *New York Times* now sees no irony in publishing an op-ed article by him in defense of the invasion of Georgia, repeating exaggerated claims of the "horrifying scenes" for which he believes that Georgia and the United States are responsible, with "the American news media leading the way."

Vladimir Putin has devoted his career to reestablishing force as the Russian state's main instrument, reversing Gorbachev's legacy. He has made no secret of it, declaring that the fall of the Soviet Union was "the greatest geopolitical disaster of the 20th century." He has disregarded the rule of law, rigging the political process in favor of his personal rule, virtually extinguishing freedom of speech, and bringing the energy industry under state control. Reliance upon force necessarily unleashes corruption and crime. Putin's associates have become billionaires; his opponents have been broken and quite likely murdered.

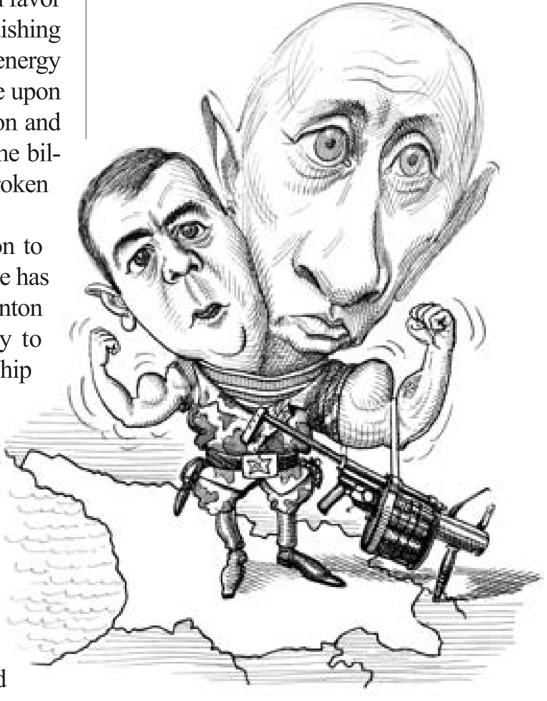
In the face of this steady reversion to Soviet behavior, the Western response has been to mollify and placate. The Clinton administration went out of its way to make every allowance. The Partnership for Peace, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the NATO-Russia Council, and Russia's elevation to the G8 are among the numerous initiatives based on the illusion that Russia is a democracy or the wishful thinking that it is becoming one. President Bush looked into Putin's eyes, thought he could trust him, and now confronts a fait accompli to which he is virtually powerless to respond—the position of most American presidents during the Soviet era.

The Europeans have been outright appeasers. Gerhard Schroeder, the former German chancellor, is on the board of Gazprom, the Russian energy monopoly whose treatment of Germany and other consumers resembles blackmail. In April, Angela Merkel led a successful drive to keep Ukraine and Georgia out of NATO—the opposite decision might have held off Russia's invasion. Responding for the European Union to the attack on Georgia, Nicolas Sarkozy hurried to Moscow, where he took down Medvedev's orders—which omitted mention of Georgia's territorial integrity and were worded with a looseness that the Russians claim allows them to occupy whatever parts of Georgia suit them. Like a dutiful errand boy, Sarkozy delivered this capitulation to a mortified Saakashvili in Tbilisi. Bernard Kouchner, the French foreign minister, was equally humble, paying tribute to Russia as "a great nation" and going on to say, practically beating his breast, "Look at how we have been treating it." The correspondence columns of the British press are full of letters bewailing that the West has gone in for "bear baiting" and concluding that it is only logical and right that Russia should lash out.

In the manner of the Soviet Union, Russia is taking it upon itself unilaterally to decide what the boundaries of other countries are to be and who is to govern them. Consternation grips neighbors who have been through this life-and-death experience before, within living memory. The Baltic republics, the Asian Muslim republics, and Moldova all contain ethnic-Russian inhabitants, on whose behalf some grievance is easy to concoct, allowing the Kremlin to treat these neighbors in the same way it has treated Georgia.

Ukraine stands in the greatest danger. Russians tend to believe that country is their ancient patrimony. Khrushchev gave the Crimea to Ukraine, a token gesture in his day. Russians are in the majority there, and nationalist extremists are already urging them to reverse Khrushchev's quixotic gift. As with Georgia, Putin did everything he could to derail Ukraine's democratic revolution: Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko suffered dioxin poisoning, possibly at the hands of Russian agents. The agreement that the Russian fleet may use the Black Sea port of Sevastopol runs out in 2017, and senior Russian officers have already declared that this is an interest they will never give up. In a dramatic display of solidarity—and alarm—Yushchenko, President Lech Kaczynski of Poland, and the three Baltic presidents flew to Tbilisi for a joint press conference. Determined to defend their independence, Ukraine seeks NATO membership while Poland has hastily concluded an agreement to have an American missile-defense system on its soil. Russian spokesmen threaten both countries with nuclear strikes. Marxist ideology may be missing, but the intimidation hews to the familiar Soviet style.

Force as the instrument of policy supersedes the abstract barriers of international law erected to contain it. The West now can expect that a nationalist Russia will mobilize its resources to probe every weak point around its borders: It will reach as far as possible, devising new hostilities (such as the cyberwar waged against Estonia and Georgia), playing on the retreat of NATO and European defeatism, exploiting its control over oil and gas supplies, protecting Iran's bid for the nuclear bomb, and once more selling weaponry to destabilize the Middle East—everywhere testing the resolution of the next American president. If this isn't Cold War II, how should it be described? **NR**



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RUSSIA II

Caucasus Diary

'A shiver of instability runs through . . .'

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

Yerevan, Armenia

ARRIVING here is a little like arriving in Las Vegas. The terrain, yellow desert and scrubs, is similar to that of Nevada, and the road from the airport is banked by neon-lit casinos. There is even a smaller version of the Las Vegas cowboy sign, whose swinging arm directs gamblers to a particular casino. During the Soviet period, it was popular with Russian visitors. But since vacation options for Russians were strictly limited, the locals had little incentive to upgrade hotels and other tourist facilities.

The town was a pleasant historic backwater. Armenia was supposedly the first nation to convert formally to Christianity (in the 4th century), but Moscow's rule took its toll, and wherever you see an attractive public building such as an opera house—and Yerevan has quite a number of them—it is almost certainly erected on the ruins of an Armenian Orthodox church.

Today Yerevan is popular with Russian investors and developers. Russian investors own almost all of the country's infrastructure. In Yerevan a massive building boom is in progress. Vast cranes dominate the skyline. (One resident counted 75 from her office terrace.)

There is still an aroma of the Third World in the dusty side streets. But Yerevan will soon become a real capital city and a universally popular tourist destination—or, rather, it would do so if it were not located next door to the full-scale international crisis in Georgia.

* * *

On the way to lunch I receive a call on my mobile phone from a friend in Oxford. I postpone the conversation, explaining that I am in a taxi in the middle of Yerevan. I get a fine example of British one-upmanship in reply:

"Oh, did the taxi take a wrong turning?"

* * *

But you can see his point: The southern Caucasus is the Rubik's Cube of international disputes. Every time you try to solve one crisis, you make another worse. Next door to Armenia is oil-rich and Muslim Azerbaijan. Both countries claim the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, which the Soviets assigned to Azerbaijan even though its population was mainly Armenian. They went to war over it even though both were constituent states of the USSR. In 1994 a ceasefire left the Armenians in possession of both Nagorno-Karabakh and some part of Azerbaijan proper. Refugees exist on both sides. Nothing is settled.

The dispute is one of those "frozen conflicts" that Russia has cleverly exploited to maintain indirect control of its "near abroad." Armenia and Azerbaijan are both anxious to keep Russia on their side, though neither likes Russian dominance of the neighborhood.

But other powerful neighbors also intervene. Sympathetic to Azerbaijan on ethno-religious grounds, Turkey has imposed a blockade on Armenian trade going through its territory. That is a real restraint on Armenia's otherwise very healthy economy—growing in recent years at an average of 13 percent thanks to privatization and other reforms.

The Turkish blockade means that a very high proportion of Armenia's trade travels by rail through Georgia to the port of Poti on the Black Sea. That railway is now vulnerable to Russian disruption—and Poti is still in Russian military hands.

* * *

"A Graham Greene sort of place" is how a friend described Yerevan's mixture of exoticism and dustiness to me in advance. I should have thought it rather an Eric Ambler sort of place, after the British espionage-thriller writer (*A Coffin for Dimitrios*, *Journey into Fear*, *Topkapi*) who specialized in innocents abroad getting drawn into dangerous mysteries against seedily exotic backdrops.

The day before I left Prague, one of my colleagues in Radio Liberty's office in Armenia was beaten up. He was the 16th journalist beaten up in Armenia in the last six months or so. No one has yet been arrested for these attacks.

Armenia's president made a very strong statement, ordering the police to investigate the attack zealously. Since this was a big story in Yerevan, I was interviewed by two female journalists, one of whom had herself been roughed up, from opposition newspapers.

As executive editor of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty I welcomed the president's remarks as a first step towards providing the media with proper protection from political violence. My interviewers exchanged skeptical glances.

* * *

Suspicion between the media and the government is only one example of a wider problem. Armenia has been exceptionally divided since March 1, when police shot demonstrators protesting abuses in an election that returned the ruling-party candidate with an implausible 52 percent majority.

Ten people died, including one policeman; some demonstrators and opposition figures were arrested; and a state of emergency was imposed for a time. This was a shock to an Armenian public that had been assuming that gradual if erratic progress towards real democracy was unstoppable.

A coalition of opposition parties has since been holding more or less permanent demonstrations in Yerevan—demonstrations that are declared illegal but allowed to proceed. At the same time the government has been proceeding too—with trials of demonstrators. U.S. and European officials and human rights NGOs appeal solemnly for "dialogue" between government and opposition.

Pres. Serzh Sargsyan has made some modest conciliatory gestures of talking with the opposition, and the leading opposition figure, Levon Ter-Petrossian, has responded by placing most of the blame for the brutal crackdown on the previous president.

A Western diplomat suggests over lunch that the president is waiting for a substantial number of demonstrators to be convicted by the courts of using violence. He could then issue an amnesty all around while pointing out that the opposition was shown to be as blameworthy as the government (though he might not phrase it exactly that way). Reconciliation would then proceed.

* * *

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That may happen. Sargsyan seems to want something like it. But the real underlying question is: Will the tragedy of March 1 push Armenians on both sides of the divide to accept truly fair elections and, just as important, fair campaigns leading up to them?

Americans and Europeans are here in droves urging such an outcome (and offering the inducement of greater economic integration with the West). But as my diplomat friend points out, the Russians are also here in force: "Come over to the dark side. Good money and no questions asked."

Given that Russian influence on Armenia is so strong, it is significant that this appeal is not more effective. Both government and opposition keep talking to their Western interlocutors, if not to each other. It is possible that simple admiration for democracy is the reason. But it is also possible that Armenians, a famously shrewd and even crafty people, have some doubts that their powerful neighbor will ultimately prove to be the winning side, even locally.

* * *

An important diplomatic breakthrough occurs while I am in Yerevan. The Turkish–Armenian youth-soccer match ends in a 2–1 victory for the Armenians. Significantly, the crowd cheers both sides after a good-natured game in the presence of Turkish diplomats.

This is considered a good omen for the adult Turkish–Armenian game in September, to which President Sargsyan has invited his Turkish counterpart, Abdullah Gul. Gul's acceptance is still uncertain, but the smart money is now betting the visit will take place. If so, that would be merely the start of a long process of negotiations on a range of issues, from the Turkish massacres of Armenians in the First World War—were they state-ordered genocide or something less heinous?—to lifting Turkey's embargo on Armenian trade.

But it would be a start that few people expected a month ago. Observers then assumed that Azerbaijan had enough clout with Ankara to head off any such talking. What changed matters is the Russian attack on Georgia. A shiver of instability has run through the Caucasus, and all the major players except Russia are anxious to restore mutual security as best they can.

Turkey, Armenia, and Georgia are nervous about the threat that ethnic and regional instability poses to the oil and gas pipelines. All three, especially Georgia at present, would like to see Russian dominance diluted. All now seem more prepared to tone down their local conflicts. Nagorno-Karabakh has been consigned to the icebox for the moment. Talks between Ankara and Yerevan are on the agenda.

But can anything more substantial and positive be done?

* * *

Vartan Oskanian was the Armenian foreign minister for ten years, until this April. He now heads a think tank, the Civilitas Foundation, in Yerevan. He is one of the few Armenian politicians who exerts moral authority over government and opposition at home and enjoys high repute abroad.

In his office overlooking the city, he sketches out Caucasian realities. The Russians are dominant, but the Caucasus wants to be part of modern Europe. People want prosperity and freedom. For that, however, they need security that NATO cannot provide in the teeth of Russian opposition. So faster integration into the European Union is part of the answer—and acceptable to the Russians since, being heavily invested in Armenia, they too would gain from closer EU ties.

All this would be progress, but not quite enough. There has to be a security component of any long-term solution. If NATO is not the answer, what is? I point out that Turkey has recently woken up from almost a century of sleep on foreign policy. It is sponsoring Syrian-Israeli talks, appointing more than a dozen Turkish ambassadors to African countries, and—most important—advancing a proposal for a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform. Such an initiative would, among other things, dilute Russian influence over the Caucasus by the simple expedient of increasing Turkish influence.

Oskanian is intrigued by this but, moderately skeptical, he wants to see more details.

A few days later in the *International Herald Tribune*, he embraces the idea more warmly, noticing that Turkey's leaders have specifically mentioned including Armenia in such a pact, and arguing that it could be the basis for a wider U.S.-European-Turkish security guarantee.

Much may depend on the soccer match on September 6 in Yerevan. Maybe this time the Armenians should plan to lose.

* * *

Tbilisi, Georgia

Seated in an open-air restaurant overlooking the River Mtkvari, enjoying a light lunch of mountain trout and Georgian salad, one finds it hard to believe that Russian tanks are only about 25 kilometers away—indeed, that they may be even closer by the time the Turkish coffee arrives. Tbilisi shows only a few signs of being a capital city at war. Yet only an hour's drive away Russian soldiers are systematically destroying Georgia's military (and some of its civil) infrastructure, occupying towns and villages, establishing "buffer zones" in "Georgia proper" to add to their annexation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and arresting Georgian soldiers.

This is a very postmodern kind of war.

The Russians have plainly won militarily. Equally plainly, however, they are losing the propaganda war—almost no impartial observer believes their claims of "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing"—and they may be losing the diplomatic and economic wars too.

Poland has already signed the U.S. missile-defense deal that Putin opposes; NATO has agreed that there cannot be "business as usual" as long as Russia occupies Georgia; Western Europeans are becoming antsy about their dependency on Russian energy; and nervous investors took $16 billion out of the country in the week following its military success. Mild as these reactions are, they have prevented the Russians from marching to Tbilisi and "suiciding" Saakashvili. So far.

* * *

Georgians are well aware of these postmodern realities. Temur Iakobashvili is their minister for reintegration—surely the most optimistic ministerial title in history. But he is bleakly realistic when I interview him for RFE/RL.

His first point is a concession. Yes, there was a "miscalculation" by Georgia when it launched an offensive on its breakaway territories in early August. But Georgians were not the only people who miscalculated: "When I was at a press conference in Brussels in May of this year and I said we were on the brink of war, I saw a lot of worried faces coming to me and saying: 'You

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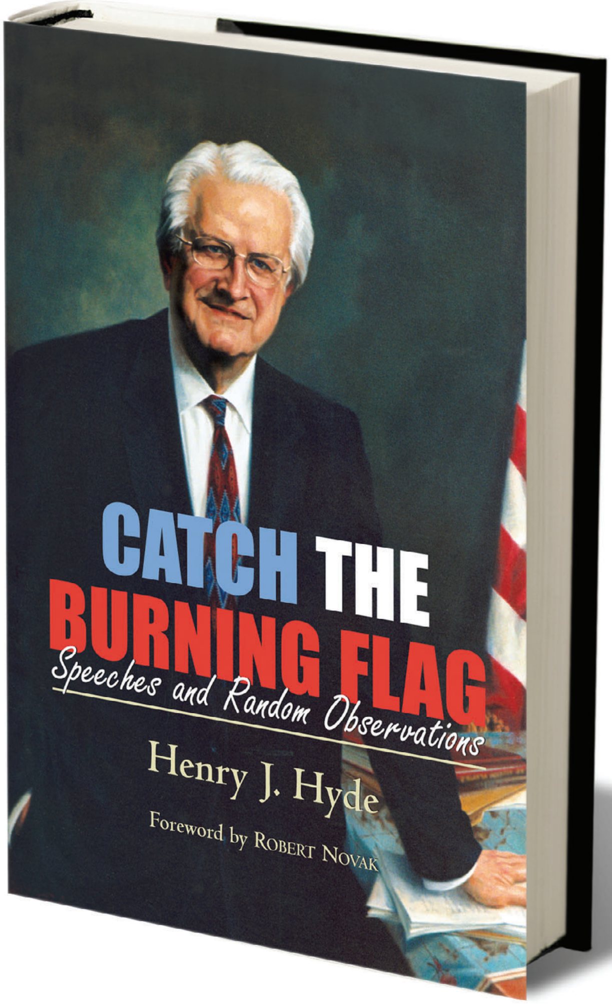
Catch the Burning Flag: Speeches and Random Observations

A giant in stature and influence, the late Henry Hyde's defense of freedom, justice, and the sanctity of innocent human life left a powerful legacy on Capitol Hill and around the world. Saddened by his recent death, we're nevertheless happy to announce *National Review*'s new book by the revered Illinois Republican lawmaker—*Catch the Burning Flag, Speeches and Random Observations.* This handsome hardcover collection captures the most important thoughts and deepest reflections by the great conservative, renowned for decades as the House of Representatives' most persuasive orator. A must for your library, and a wonderful gift, *Catch the Burning Flag* (which was in final production just as our good friend passed away) includes Hyde's most powerful speeches (with his own insightful commentary) on a range of key topics, from the Clinton impeachment trials, term limits, and abortion to flag burning, the Iran-Contra affair, and the fate of Democracy. Here's what some leading figures have to say about Henry Hyde and *Catch the Burning Flag*:



George F. Will, Pulitzer Prize-winning syndicated columnist: Henry Hyde's luminous career demonstrated that strong convictions, strongly fought for, need not be impediments to bipartisan respect and affection. Readers of this volume will be delighted by the power of a much-loved man's public life. Their delight will be dampened only by the melancholy realization of how rare such men are.

Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight, Knights of Columbus: For more than three decades, Henry Hyde was one of the most respected Members of Congress. No wonder that this collection of his speeches and essays is wise and inspiring, poignant and funny, candid and insightful—sometimes all at the same time. Hyde recently received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our nation's highest civilian honor. This book shows how richly he deserved it.

Robert Novak, syndicated columnist (from his Foreword): These speeches reflect a rare combination of eloquence and erudition, and something more. In an age of increasing specialization on Capitol Hill, Henry Hyde was the Renaissance man there. Readers of this book must be impressed by the breadth and variety of his expertise. Considering the liberal assault on Hyde as a Catholic extremist who keeps poor women from abortions and persecuted Bill Clinton, the tone here may come as a surprise to some. These selections are free of Republican partisanship and remarkably non-ideological.

***Catch the Burning Flag* is available only from *National Review*, for only $22.95, which includes shipping and handling.**

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are using very strong connotation.' War is a very, very strong connotation for the European virgin ear."

It is so strong a connotation that the Europeans simply averted their eyes from the gathering storm.

Iakobashvili's second argument outlines, again realistically, how this postmodern war will be fought: "I don't see that there is any military component of pressuring Russia, but there is a political component."

But what kind of political component?

* * *

My Hudson Institute colleague Charles Fairbanks, who lives half the year in Georgia, has answered this question on *The Weekly Standard*'s website. Despite the notion that "nothing can be done," "the United States is *far* more powerful than Russia, which has an economy in the range of South Korea's, and that superiority has multiplied vastly since we strove successfully against the Soviet Union."

Georgian officials, Western businessmen, and locally based diplomats feel exactly the same thing, sometimes very impatiently. On my final night in Tbilisi, one Western diplomat outlines the string of financial and economic measures that the West can impose. Some positive measures—a series of aid and investment programs for Georgia—are already in the pipeline. The eventual package might be so generous that Georgia would be half-integrated into the EU.

The Russians might not like any of this, but the threat of negative incentives—expulsion from the G8, etc.—limits their room for disruption.

Both positive and negative incentives, however, require a strong, united West to back them. If Europe and America, or the European countries themselves, split into different camps, then the Russians could win this postmodern war—and thus gain de facto control over all the energy pipelines from Central Asia to Western Europe.

* * *

Outside my hotel in Freedom Square is a tall marble column that used to be the pedestal for a statue of Lenin. It now supports a golden statue of St. George spearing the dragon.

Unfortunately, outside the Georgian world of myth and art, the dragon is still ahead on points. **NR**

■ CULTURE WATCH

Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Persecuted

Across the country, the Boy Scouts are under attack

WILLIAM TUCKER

THE Boy Scouts of America have been dragged onto the front lines of the culture wars. "It started 20 years ago with lawsuits complaining girls and atheists were being excluded," says Robert Bork Jr., spokesman for the BSA in Washington and son of the former Supreme Court nominee. "Then there were the homosexual cases, culminating in the Supreme Court's *Dale* decision in 2000, which ruled that as a private organization, the Scouts were entitled to choose their own members. The American Civil Liberties Union lost, but has been trying ever since to have the Scouts expelled from the public square."

The Scouts, while indeed a private organization, have significant ties to public institutions. They get special treatment in the use of national and state parks and military facilities for their campouts and jamborees. They also recruit in public schools.

These favors hardly go unreciprocated. Probably no other organization in America volunteers as much time—7 million hours since 2004 alone—improving public property and assisting public programs. This summer the Order of the Arrow (a kind of Scout alumni association) organized a "Five Sites, Five Weeks, Five Thousand Arrowmen" project, in which 5,000 volunteers spent five weeks implementing conservation and improving public facilities in national forests from Virginia to Wyoming. "Good Turn for America," another Scouting effort, cleans up hundreds of city parks and schoolyards and helps the Department of Health and Human Services administer its campaigns against teenage tobacco use and childhood obesity. As part of the leadership training required to become an Eagle Scout, a boy organizes his troop in performing a community service. Scores of municipal and state parks and National Historic Sites have been improved by Eagle projects. The Phoenix-area council has spent more than a thousand hours on fire-prevention and conservation projects in the Grand Canyon and nearby national forests.

Mr. Tucker, who usually writes on energy and the environment, is former assistant scoutmaster of Troop 815, Brooklyn, N.Y.

No one has yet tried to bar the Scouts from these efforts. Instead, the ACLU and gay-rights groups have concentrated their fire on urban Scout councils on the East and West Coasts. For example, in 2000 (shortly after a Scout color guard was booed at the Democratic National Convention), the Philadelphia city council pounced. In 1928 the city had leased a half-acre property to the group for $1 a year, on which the Boy Scouts had constructed a 7,500-square-foot Beaux Arts headquarters at their own expense. The city council first tried to evict the Scouts, and has now switched to demanding $200,000 a year in rent. After winning in the state courts, city solicitor Shelley Smith issued an eviction notice. The Scouts have countersued in federal court.

Similarly, through leases with the city, Boy Scouts in the San Diego area have run Camp Balboa and a half acre on Fiesta Island for decades, and have spent millions of their own dollars developing the properties. Both parks are open to the public. The ACLU filed suit on behalf of a lesbian couple and an agnostic couple, arguing that the Scouts were a religious organization and therefore the leases violated the establishment clause. The city council fought at first, but in early 2004, after the court decisions had started going the other way, it announced it would "take no position" in the legal proceedings regarding its own leases. The case drags on, and unlike the Boy Scouts, the ACLU does not volunteer its time: In return for leaving the city out of the matter (after, of course, dragging the city into the matter), it got $790,000 for legal fees and $160,000 for court costs.

There's more to the urban Boy Scouts than buildings and parks. In the 1990s, the BSA created "Learning for Life," an after-

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Baltimore, MD— As unbelievable as it seems the key to stopping many cancers has been around for over 30 years. Yet it has been banned. Blocked. And kept out of your medicine cabinet by the very agency designed to protect your health—the FDA.

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You read that right. He was not only shut down—but also forced out of the country where others benefited from his discovery. That was 39 years ago. How many other treatments have they been allowed to hide? Just as in the case of Dr. Burton's miracle serum these too go unmentioned.

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Decades ago, European research scientist Dr. Johanna Budwig, a six-time Nobel Award nominee, discovered a totally natural formula that not only protects against the development of cancer, but people all over the world who have been diagnosed with incurable cancer and sent home to die have actually benefited from her research—and now lead normal lives.

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They walked away from traditional cancer treatments...and were healed! Throughout the pages of *How to Fight Cancer & Win* you'll meet real people who were diagnosed with cancer—suffered through harsh conventional treatments—turned their backs on so called modern medicine—only to be miraculously healed by natural means! Here is just a sampling of what others have to say about the book.

"I bought *How to Fight Cancer & Win* and this has to be the greatest book I've ever read. I have had astounding results from the easy to understand knowledge found in this book. My whole life has improved drastically and I have done so much for many others. The information goes far beyond the health thinking of today." *—Hugh M.*

"I can't find adequate words to describe my appreciation of your work in providing *How to Fight Cancer & Win*. You had to do an enormous amount of research to bring this vast and most important knowledge to your readers.

My doctor found two tumors on my prostate with a high P.S.A. He scheduled a time to surgically remove the prostate, but I canceled the appointment. Instead I went on the diet discussed in the book combined with another supplement. Over the months my P.S.A. has lowered until the last reading was one point two." *—Duncan M.*

"In my 55 years as a Country Family Physician, I have never read a more 'down to earth,' practical resume of cancer prevention and treatments, than in this book. It needs to be studied worldwide for the prevention of cancer by all researchers who are looking for a cure." *—Edward S., M.D.*

"As a cancer patient who has been battling lymphatic cancer on and off for almost three years now, I was very pleased to stumble across *How to Fight Cancer & Win*. The book was inspiring, well-written and packed with useful information for any cancer patient looking to maximize his or her chances for recovery." *—Romany S.*

"I've been incorporating Dr. Budwig's natural remedy into my diet and have told others about it. Your book is very informative and has information I've never heard about before (and I've read many books on the cancer and nutrition link). Thanks for the wonderful information." *—Molly G.*

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school program in character education performed on contract with public school districts. Explorer Scouts, a co-ed adventure program aimed at older teens and often housed in police buildings, was also expanded. Albert Shanker, longtime president of New York City's United Federation of Teachers, called scouting "the best educational institution in America."

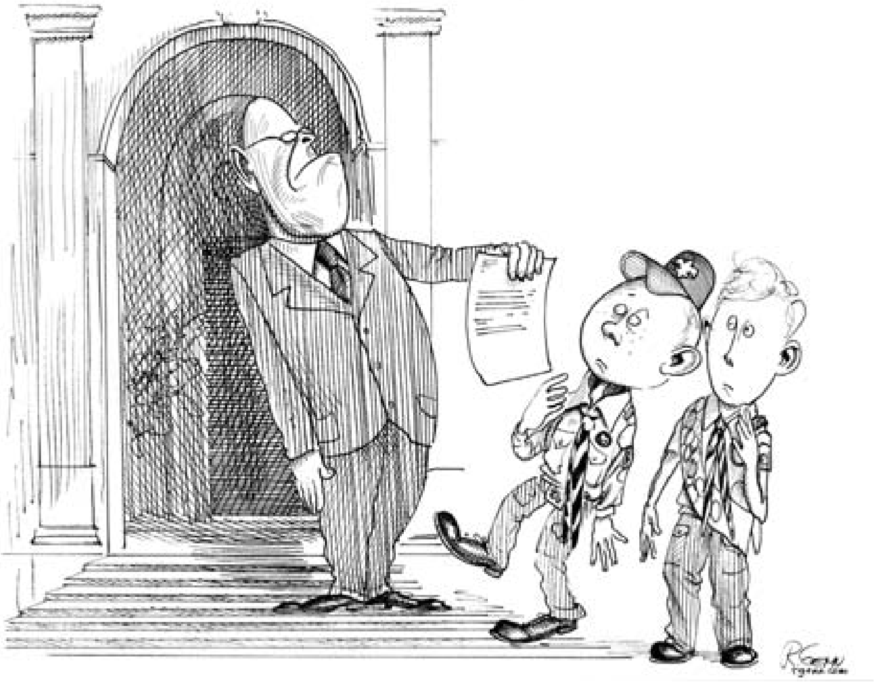
One might hope that the ACLU, even while trying to push the Scouts off of real estate they've heavily invested in, would leave these programs alone. But after *Dale*, the ACLU succeeded in abolishing the Chicago Police Department's Explorer program. Lambda, the legal arm of the gay-rights movement, is trying to do the same in Los Angeles. Other programs are under attack all over the country.

When these initiatives lose public support, it's hard for them to come up with money elsewhere. "In suburban areas, you have a lot of well-to-do parents who can support the troop. They can pay for the uniforms, buy the camping equipment, and raise the money for the bus tours to the Grand Tetons," says George Davidson, the New York lawyer who argued *Dale* before the Supreme Court. "It's the urban programs that are always starving for money. They're the ones being wounded by this."

And even private support is under attack. Gay-rights advocates in dozens of cities have persuaded United Way to stop supporting the Scouts. When loss of corporate funding decimated the Greater New York Council, one of the first things to go was the program to send inner-city non-Scouts to summer camp. The BSA's South Florida Council lost $700,000 annually, most of which had gone to its ScoutReach program targeting "at-risk youth."

It's hard to overestimate the opportunities lost. "I was a gang member myself when I was a kid," says J. D. Stark, a 63-year-old retired New York City Transit worker and veteran Boy Scout leader. "We were reading some of those early Greek and Roman historians looking for battle strategies. I hate to think of what would have happened to me if I had kept that up. But one day I met an adult who talked me into joining the Scouts. It saved my life."

In a 2000 *City Journal* article, Heather Mac Donald described spending several months attending Scout meetings around New York City. All over Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant, small troops practiced rigorous uniform inspections and learned to saw logs in church basements. While the skills seemed anachronistic, the boys treasured the discipline. Scouting provides male example and leadership in a world where they are sorely lacking. "The scoutmaster may be the only stable adult in a child's life. Schools call him about truant boys; single mothers or grandmothers invoke his wrath to try to get a boy to behave," wrote Mac Donald.



The Scouts' urban programs also provide a place where classes and races mix un-self-consciously. I was a Scout leader in Brooklyn for 15 years, starting in Park Slope, the kind of upscale-Left milieu where homosexuality draws much less attention than a Scout uniform. ("You're not going to make them do anything *patriotic*, are you?" one mother asked.) After a few years we were expelled from our sponsoring church, where a new minister wanted to bring lesbians into his parish, so we moved to a Spanish-speaking Catholic church in a nearby neighborhood.

I teamed with a scoutmaster who had once been a Young Lord (the Puerto Rican equivalent of the Black Panthers), and we put together a troop that was half Park Slope privilege and half public housing. It meshed beautifully. We won the Brooklyn Klondike Derby (a sled race) our first year, and everyone's horizons expanded. When a partially paralyzed 15-year-old from the projects joined the troop, the boys spent half their time on camping trips helping him up and down the mountains.

Giving in to the gay-rights lobby is no solution for the Scouts. For every activist who sees the BSA involvement as a stain on the municipal coat of arms, there are a hundred parents who don't like the idea of sending their son on an overnight camping trip with an avowed homosexual. Those on the radical sexual Left encourage these fears: The North American Man-Boy Love Association has pictured Boy Scouts in its literature and advised members to use Scout troops as recruiting grounds. In a 1999 performance in Royal Albert Hall, Elton John had six men in Cub Scout uniforms perform a striptease while he sang "It's a Sin."

This is of course not to say that most, or even many, homosexuals would present a risk to youths. But the point remains that the BSA is a private organization whose essence is to promote a traditional code of moral and aesthetic value to young men. Its members strive to "do a good turn daily," and very often succeed. Is American society willing to return the favor? **NR**

ROMAN GENN

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Professor Kenneth W. Harl is Professor of Classical and Byzantine History at Tulane University in New Orleans, where he has been teaching since 1978. He earned his Bachelor's degree from Trinity College and went on to earn his Master's and Ph.D. from Yale University.

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Dr. Harl specializes in the Mediterranean civilizations of Greece, Rome, Egypt, and Byzantium. He has published numerous articles and is the author of *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, A.D. 180–275* and *Coinage in the Roman Economy, 300 B.C. to A.D. 700*. He is also a veteran field researcher who has served since 1999 on the Editorial Board of the *American Journal of Archaeology*.

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One very loud mouth a network doth tarnish

STEPHEN SPRUIELL

In late October of last year, MSNBC moved its offices from Secaucus, N.J., to NBC headquarters at 30 Rockefeller Plaza. "It was cool," one longtime MSNBC employee says of the move. "All these old offices with so much history . . . you'd be walking around and someone would point out John Belushi's old office."

But one MSNBC employee wasn't happy with his office. According to two sources who worked for the network at the time, Keith Olbermann, host of MSNBC's *Countdown*, didn't like his door. It had a window. He wanted a solid one.

He called the building manager. "They told him, 'Look, it's an old building, we're not changing the doors,'" the longtime employee says. "So Keith calls [MSNBC president] Phil Griffin and says, 'I want a new door or I'm not going on the air tonight.' And so Phil went and got him a new door."

Because whatever Keith wants, Keith gets.

THE FRINGE ON TOP

Despite what you may have heard, Olbermann's MSNBC is not becoming a network for liberals—not for your average hybrid-driving, *New Yorker*–reading, fair-trade-coffee-drinking liberals, anyway. Those liberals already have networks: They have ABC, CBS, CNN, National Public Radio, as well as Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* and its mock-talk counterpart, *The Colbert Report*.

No. Under Olbermann, MSNBC is becoming something different. It is becoming a network for people who write furious diatribes on group blogs like Daily Kos; who think that President Bush should be indicted for war crimes; who use phrases like "vast right-wing conspiracy" unironically—a network for people who agree that the Republican party has reduced to lapdogs most of the journalists at ABC, CBS, and CNN, to say nothing of the contemptible Fox News. MSNBC *was* a liberal network. It is now in the process of becoming a network for the far Left. (NBC News and MSNBC declined to comment for this article.)

MSNBC's hard-left turn was not motivated by ideology. Griffin more or less admitted to the *New York Times* last year that it was a business decision. For years, the network has lagged behind cable-news rivals Fox News and CNN. But even though it remains in third place, MSNBC's ratings have undeniably improved in recent years behind the success of Olbermann's *Countdown*, particularly since he turned the show into an orgy of Bush-bashing. "They've discovered that partisan commentary sells on cable," says S. Robert Lichter, president of the Center for Media and Public Affairs.

Partisans thrive in the 24-hour, 100-plus-channel environment of cable, because viewers with so many choices will usually choose to get their news from someone who shares their beliefs. But what works on cable doesn't necessarily work for the "big three" network-news broadcasts. Lichter explains that in a world of proliferating news sources, ABC, CBS, and NBC must struggle to offer something unique. "What they've got is their credibility, defined by their evenhandedness," he says, "and that is why they so jealously guard their reputations for objective neutrality."

Thus MSNBC's great leap leftward poses a big problem for

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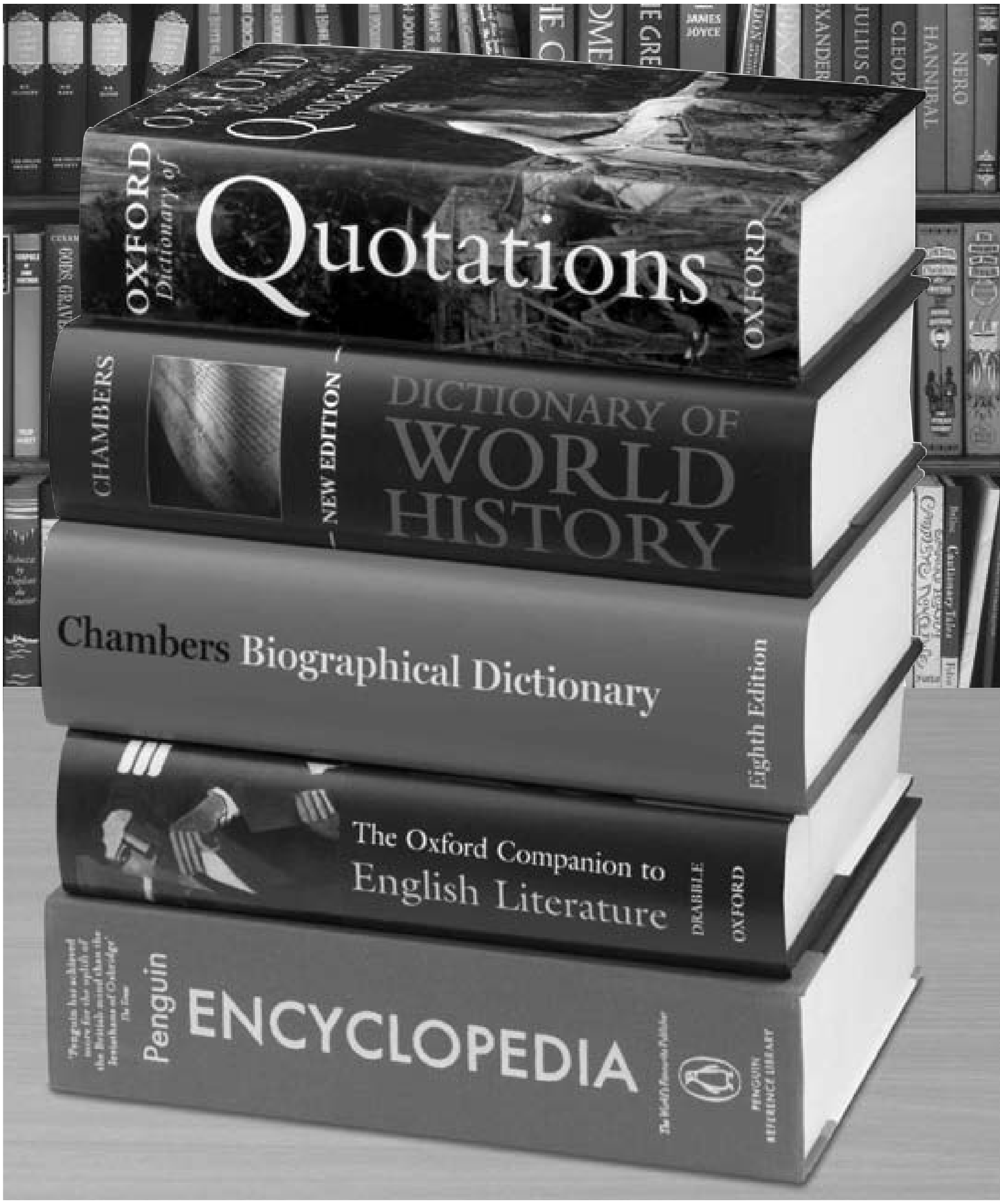
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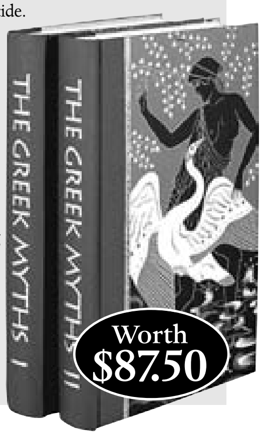

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2008

CRU
2005
Chardonnay
TWO VINEYARDS MONTE
CRU
2005
Pinot Noir
SANTA LUCIA HIGHLANDS MONTEREY COUNTY

CARMICHAEL "Art of the Blend"

Code	Wine	Size	Price	Description
C1	**Carmichael "Sur le Pont" 2005**	750 mL	**$18.99**	A full-bodied blend of Syrah, Greneche and Carrignane, showing great dark red fruit flavors.
C2	**Carmichael "Sa Vini" 2005**	750 mL	**$18.99**	Notes of red cherry, spice, and lavender enhance this Sangiovese Blend.
C3	**Carmichael "Grigio e Bianco" 2007**	750 mL	**$16.99**	Complex and versatile blend of Pinot Grigio, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay.
C4	**Carmichael "Satisfaction" 2006**	750 mL	**$34.99**	A delicious Cabernet and Merlot blend, showcasing vibrant flavors of black cherry and cassis.
C5	**Carmichael "Lonesome Oak" 2005**	750 mL	**$18.99**	Black pepper nuances with rustic flavors of blackberry, plum and currant.

CRU "Artfully Interpreting Terroir"

Code	Wine	Size	Price	Description
CR1	**CRU Chardonnay—2 Vineyards 2006**	750 mL	**$ 19.99**	A refined composition of crisp citrus layered with ripe tropical fruit.
CR2	**CRU Pinot Noir—2 Vineyards 2006**	750 mL	**$ 19.99**	Dark, rich, and flavorful with bright cherry fruit and bracing acidity.

CRU—Single Vineyard Selections

Code	Wine	Size	Price	Description
CR3	**CRU Chardonnay—Redding Ranch 2006**	750 mL	**$ 29.99**	Rich and full, with tropical fruit flavors.
CR4	**CRU Chardonnay VDM 2006 Santa Lucia Highlands**	750 mL	**$ 29.99**	Citrus, apple and pear flavors combined with a fat, buttery, oaky body.
CR5	**CRU Pinot Noir—Chualar Canyon 2006**	750 mL	**$ 29.99**	Big, dark and dense with rich black stone fruit flavors and earthy undertones.
CR6	**CRU Pinot Noir—VDM 2006 Santa Lucia Highlands**	750 mL	**$ 29.99**	Elegant and well balanced with classic Pinot Noir black cherry fruit flavors.

YOSEMITE VIEW
CALIFORNIA
Syrah
EMIT
IEW
Merlot

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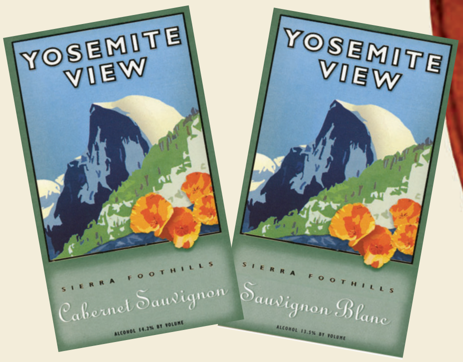

Y1 Yosemite View Sauvignon Blanc, 2007 750 mL $12.99
Extreme fruit, showing flavors of grapefruit and melon with a punch of herbs.

Y2 Yosemite View Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 750 mL $14.99
Rich, ruby red currant with black cherry fruit, layered over toffee and herbs.

Y3 Yosemite View Syrah 2005 750 mL $14.99
Sexy black currant and plum fruit layered with cocoa and coffee.

Y4 Yosemite View Merlot 2005 750 mL $14.99
Big and brawny, loaded with blackberries, dried herbs.

Y5 Yosemite View Zinfandel 2005 750 mL $14.99
Full throttle, zesty red berry flavors, dusted with cocoa.

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C2	Carmichael "Sa Vini" 2005	___ $18.99	___ $227.88
C3	Carmichael "Grigio e Bianco" 2006	___ $16.99	___ $203.88
C4	Carmichael "Satisfaction" 2006	___ $34.99	___ $419.88
C5	Carmichael "Lonesome Oak" 2005	___ $18.99	___ $227.88
CR1	CRU Chardonnay—2 Vineyards 2006	___ $19.99	___ $239.88
CR2	CRU Pinot Noir—2 Vineyards 2006	___ $19.99	___ $239.88
CR3	CRU Chardonnay—Redding 2006	___ $29.99	___ $359.88
CR4	CRU Chardonnay—VDMN/SLH 2006	___ $29.99	___ $359.88
CR5	CRU Pinot Noir—Chualar Cyn 2006	___ $29.99	___ $359.88
CR6	CRU Pinot Noir—VDMN/SLH 2006	___ $29.99	___ $359.88
Y1	Yosemite View Sauvignon Blanc, 2007	___ $12.99	___ $155.88
Y2	Yosemite View Cabernet Sauvignon 2005	___ $14.99	___ $179.88
Y3	Yosemite View Syrah 2005	___ $14.99	___ $179.88
Y4	Yosemite View Merlot 2005	___ $14.99	___ $179.88
Y5	Yosemite View Zinfandel 2005	___ $14.99	___ $179.88

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NBC's news division. The traditional journalists at NBC News—guys like Brian Williams, Tom Brokaw, and, until recently, Tim Russert—are said to be privately appalled by the way MSNBC's naked partisanship is rubbing off on NBC News, but on this matter they have been overruled. NBC Universal president Jeff Zucker recently told a conference of business students, "The definition of NBC News is really changing, and it's becoming more MSNBC and MSNBC.com."

Here's what Zucker means: The number of viewers who watch *Countdown* each night (around a million) is still small compared with the number of viewers who watch the *NBC Nightly News* (around 8 million). But in 2007, MSNBC's primetime audience grew by 28 percent, while *NBC Nightly News*'s declined by 13 percent. Whatever works at MSNBC is going to be emulated across the news division. "It's follow the leader," a former NBC executive tells me. "Those who work for broadcast primarily are constantly reminded," he says, that their futures depend on MSNBC's success.

In a *New York Times* article published last year titled "Cable Channel Nods to Ratings and Leans Left," Griffin was quoted as saying that MSNBC's leftward evolution "happened naturally." The article revealed that conservative host Tucker Carlson's show was in danger of being canceled and that NBC execs were thinking about creating a show for Rosie O'Donnell. At the time, O'Donnell was fresh off a stint as co-host of ABC's *The View*, where she gained notoriety as a far-Left partisan and 9/11 conspiracy theorist.

MSNBC eventually rejected the idea of a show for O'Donnell, but the ideological cleansing foretold in the *Times* came to pass. Tucker Carlson's show was canceled, and he was replaced by NBC's left-leaning White House correspondent David Gregory. A few months earlier, MSNBC had moved former Republican congressman Joe Scarborough from prime time to mornings to replace Don Imus, whom the network had fired for making an off-color joke about the Rutgers women's basketball team. Then–MSNBC general manager Dan Abrams had stepped down from his management position to fill Scarborough's prime-time slot, but his legal-affairs show, *Verdict with Dan Abrams*, wasn't to last long (more on that later).

KEITH POWER

It is increasingly clear that Keith Olbermann was behind most of these changes. Network insiders say that Griffin, who has known Olbermann for 27 years, goes along with anything the *Countdown* host wants. They also say that Griffin's bosses at NBC comply because *Countdown* is the first hit show MSNBC has had. They say that NBC News management waited a long time for something, anything, at MSNBC to succeed. The minute Olbermann's "Special Comments" started generating numbers, everyone at the network was encouraged to, as Griffin put it to the *Times*, "go for it."

Olbermann's "Special Comments" are nothing more than vitriolic, red-faced rants directed at anyone who makes him angry. Then–Secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld was the first to receive the "Special Comment" treatment. It was crude and hyperbolic—Olbermann called Rumsfeld a "quack" and accused Bush of threatening America with "a new type of fascism"—but it got people's attention. In late 2006, "Special Comment" became a regular feature on *Countdown*, and since then the show's ratings have nearly doubled.

As his ratings have improved, Olbermann's rants have gotten crazier. On the fifth anniversary of 9/11, he went to Ground Zero and called for the president's impeachment. He called the GOP "the leading terrorist group in this country." He called *Fox News Sunday* anchor Chris Wallace "a monkey posing as a newscaster" and President Bush a "pathological presidential liar" and the "idiot-in-chief." He is just as outspoken when being interviewed, telling *Playboy* magazine last year that Fox News "is worse than al-Qaeda" and "as dangerous as the Ku Klux Klan ever was."

Olbermann eschews debate in favor of unchallenged assertion; he surrounds himself with sycophants. *Countdown* features a regular rotation of pundits that includes zero conservatives, and almost all of the politicians and strategists he interviews are Democrats. On the rare occasion when Olbermann has a Republican on his show, it is someone like Sen. Chuck Hagel or Scott McClellan who is there to criticize the Bush administration.

Olbermann's roster also includes a couple of straight news reporters moonlighting away from their day jobs. The one seen most often is Richard Wolffe, senior White House correspondent for *Newsweek*. The McCain campaign perceives Wolffe to be one of the most pro-Obama journalists covering the election, and his association with *Countdown* has simply added to that perception.

Wolffe recently co-authored a cover story for *Newsweek* on how the Obama campaign was preparing for the GOP "onslaught." The article stated that "the Republican Party has been successfully scaring voters since 1968," and that "Sen. John McCain . . . may not be able to resist casting doubt on Obama's patriotism." The article prompted a letter from McCain aide Mark Salter, who accused *Newsweek* of aiding the Obama campaign's effort to portray even legitimate criticism of Obama as an out-of-bounds GOP smear.

Wolffe typically functions as a yes-man on *Countdown*, lending Olbermann *Newsweek*'s credibility by nodding in agreement as he spins his crazy theories. Indeed, it is dangerous to disagree with Olbermann. Former *Countdown* regular and liberal columnist Dana Milbank was recently banned from the show for writing a column in which he referred to Obama as the "presumptuous nominee." Olbermann announced his decision to ban Milbank on Daily Kos, where he has been blogging since January. (Milbank has since signed a new contract with CNN.)

Olbermann's Kos blog is emblematic of his symbiotic relationship with the left-wing blogosphere. A remarkable amount of his material is drawn directly from left-wing web sites like Kos, ThinkProgress, and Media Matters. A recent example: At a McCain town-hall event in New Mexico, a woman asked McCain a long, multi-part question about the state of veterans' health care, which she called "substandard" and "a sorry state of affairs." At the end of her question, she added, "If we don't reenact the draft, I don't think we'll have anyone to chase bin Laden to the gates of hell."

After the applause died down, McCain began his answer by saying, "Ma'am, let me say that I don't disagree with anything you said, and thank you." He then proceeded to give his standard talk on improving veterans' care, without mentioning anything about bringing back the draft. The left-wing blog ThinkProgress quickly posted an edited video clip of the exchange under the headline, "McCain on Reinstituting a Military Draft: 'I Don't Disagree.'" That night, Olbermann led his broadcast with the story.

Later that night, a well-regarded political reporter for *The Atlantic* named Marc Ambinder pointed out on his blog that the

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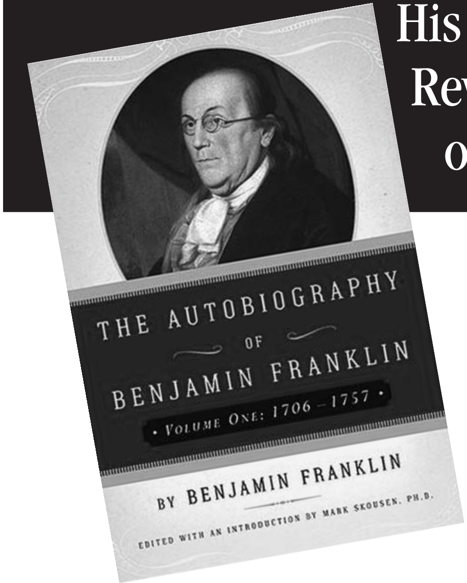

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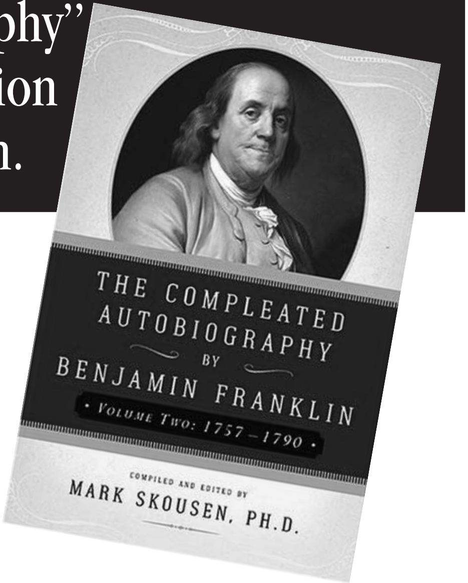

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"**This is a book for the ages!** His work deserves a Pulitzer Prize. Reading this distinctive and brilliant volume left me with a profound sense of awe for the subject." **– Larry Abraham, Insider Report** stories circulating about McCain and the draft were highly misleading. “I’ve heard McCain tell numerous audiences that he opposes a new draft,” Ambinder wrote. “As the context makes clear, McCain is focusing on the meat of the question and not the woman’s exclamation at the end.” Even though the story had been thoroughly debunked, Olbermann was undeterred. He did a segment the following night on “the mounting evidence [that] McCain . . . would start drafting your kids or you into the military.”

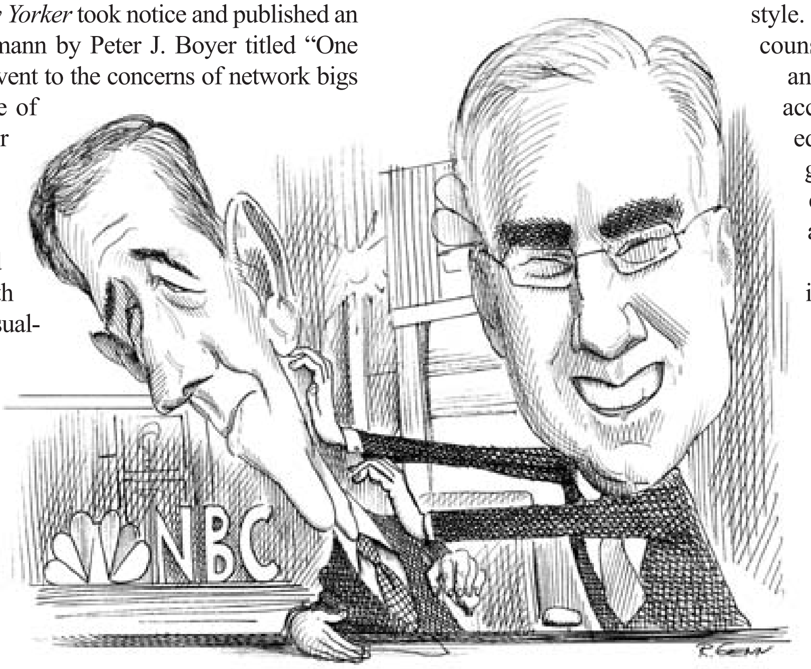
For aping their talking points, left-wing bloggers reward Olbermann by uploading *Countdown* clips and promoting his show. Not that they wouldn’t anyway. Such sentiments as he expresses on a nightly basis—Dick Cheney is a war criminal, Bush has turned America into a police state, Fox News is the GOP’s propaganda arm, etc.—are greeted as received wisdom in the left-wing blogosphere. It is hard to know how much Olbermann’s online fan base contributed to his ratings success, but it certainly played a role.

Olbermann’s sudden popularity paid off in February 2007, when NBC signed him to a four-year contract extension rumored to be worth $4 million per year. His new contract also reportedly came with a role on *NBC Nightly News*, where he was to contribute occasional “essays.” (Olbermann promised that these “essays” would not be like his “Special Comments.”) A sports broadcaster for most of his career, Olbermann was also offered a role on NBC’s Sunday-night football broadcast.

THE MAINSTREAM FIGHTS BACK?

Olbermann’s rise has provoked mixed feelings from the journalists at NBC News. On one hand, Jeff Zucker, the president of the network, has publicly declared that MSNBC is the future of NBC News. Thus anyone who wants to have a future at NBC News has to learn to live with Olbermann and his brand of journalism. On the other hand, the more traditional journalists at the network *hate* Olbermann’s way of doing business. They’re embarrassed to be associated with a man who, in a recent “Special Comment,” called the Bush administration a bunch of “cold-blooded killers” and told the president of the United States to “shut the hell up.”

During the Democratic primaries, Olbermann’s rhetoric got so overheated that the liberal *New Yorker* took notice and published an unflattering portrait of Olbermann by Peter J. Boyer titled “One Angry Man.” The piece gave vent to the concerns of network bigs like Tom Brokaw and, in one of the last print interviews he ever granted, Tim Russert. Boyer wrote that as the race got tighter, Olbermann raised eyebrows at NBC when he started attacking Hillary Clinton with the same level of ferocity he usually reserved for Republicans. For instance, when Hillary surrogate Geraldine Ferraro suggested that being a black man might be an advantage in this year’s Democratic primary, Olbermann accused her of “cheap, ignorant, vile racism”—“filth” in which Hillary was “awash.”



ROMAN GENN

Olbermann also lashed out at Clinton on several occasions when he was co-anchoring MSNBC’s primary-night election coverage with *Hardball*’s Chris Matthews. Matthews is also a big fan of Obama (the nominee famously gave him a “thrill going up [his] leg”) and a harsh critic of Clinton, to whom he was forced to apologize after attributing her political success to public sympathy over her husband’s infidelity. (When asked at a Harvard University forum whether MSNBC “officially” supports Obama, Matthews answered, “Well, it’s not official.”)

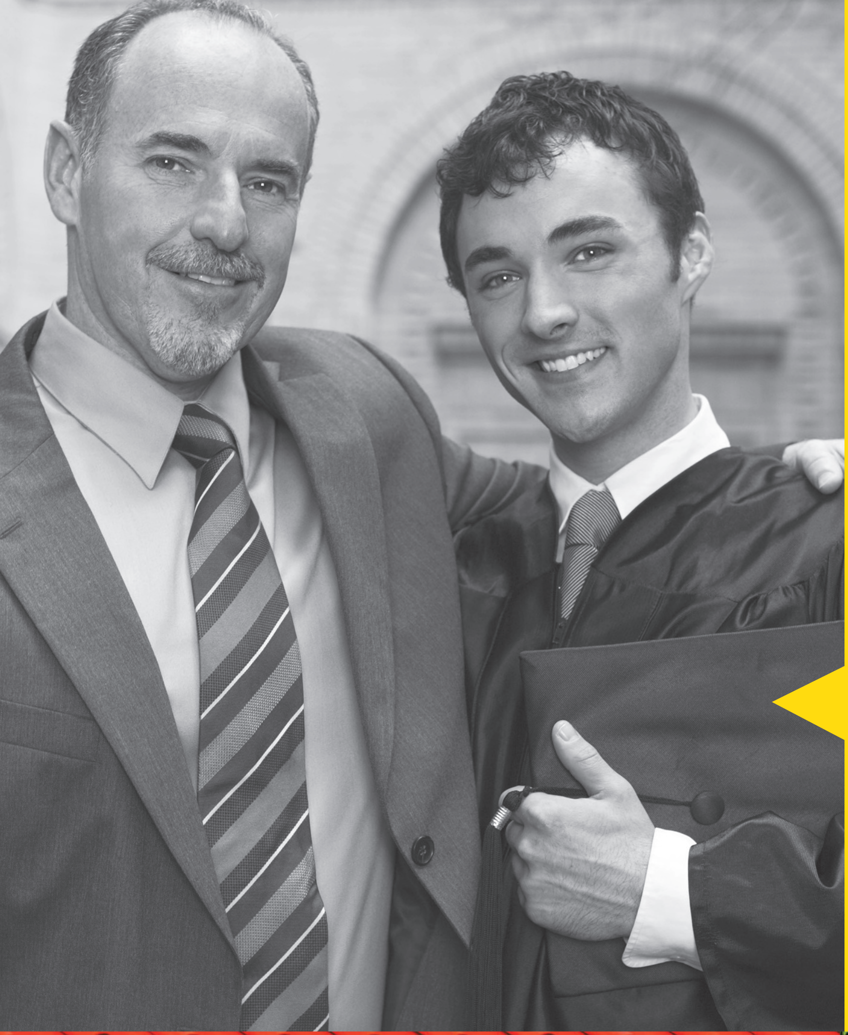
One of Olbermann’s uncharitable comments about Hillary drew an on-air rebuke from Tom Brokaw, who occasionally appears on MSNBC to offer commentary on election nights. One election night after it was clear that Hillary could not overtake Obama’s lead, Olbermann accused her of attempting to “shoehorn” her way into the spotlight with a non-concession speech. Brokaw replied that Olbermann was being “unfair.” Brokaw complained to Boyer that trying to protect NBC News’s brand from the circus at MSNBC is “a strain.”

If Boyer’s piece made it clear that some at NBC News are concerned about Olbermann’s influence at the network, it made equally clear that the people who matter at the network aren’t worried. “I think we’re onto something,” NBC News president Steve Capus told Boyer in reference to Olbermann’s “Special Comments.” Griffin brushed off concerns by comparing Olbermann’s show to the opinion page of a newspaper.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, a McCain supporter, argues that Griffin’s analogy is flawed. “At newspapers, there’s a wall of separation between the editorial board and the newsroom,” he says. “I think this dynamic MSNBC has come up with just makes this impossible.” He points out that NBC News reporters make frequent appearances on MSNBC, and MSNBC commentators Olbermann and Matthews are the network’s anchors during big news events. “Where the cable entertainment ends and the news reporting begins is getting pretty hard to see,” Graham says.

Both the Bush administration and the McCain campaign have written letters to Capus recently to complain that NBC News reporters appear to be emulating MSNBC’s more opinionated style. Last May, White House counselor Ed Gillespie sent an angry letter to NBC News accusing it of “deceptively” editing an interview Bush gave to NBC chief foreign correspondent Richard Engel.

For Gillespie, the botched interview served as an opportunity to draw attention to other irritating aspects of NBC’s coverage. For instance, two years ago NBC News made an editorial decision to declare the situation in Iraq a “civil war.” Pointing to declining levels of violence in Iraq, Gillespie



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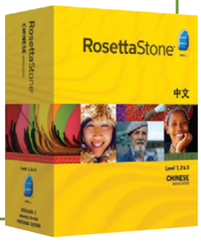

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asked, “Will the network publicly declare that the civil war has ended, or that it was wrong to declare it in the first place?” Gillespie ended his letter with this: “Mr. Capus, I’m sure you don’t want people to conclude that there is really no distinction between the ‘news’ as reported on NBC and the ‘opinion’ as reported on MSNBC, despite the increasing blurring of those lines.”

The McCain campaign used similar language in its own angry letter to NBC News. This time the dispute stemmed from a presidential forum at which Saddleback Church pastor Rick Warren interviewed each candidate. Obama went first; Warren told the audience that McCain had been placed in a “cone of silence” in which he could not hear the questions Obama was being asked.

Obama stumbled. McCain did not, and the event was widely considered to be a victory for McCain. On NBC’s *Meet the Press* the next morning, chief foreign-affairs correspondent Andrea Mitchell reported, “The Obama people must feel that he didn’t do quite as well as they might have wanted to in that context, because [what] they are putting out privately is that McCain . . . may have had some ability to overhear what the questions were to Obama. He seemed so well-prepared.” Mitchell’s comment prompted a 520-word response from McCain campaign manager Rick Davis, in which he accused her of “repeating, uncritically, a completely unsubstantiated Obama campaign claim that John McCain somehow cheated.” (As it turned out, McCain had been in a limo on the way to the church during part of Obama’s interview, but the campaign insists he did not overhear any of Obama’s questions, and even Obama’s supporters appear to have dropped the matter for now.)

Like Gillespie, Davis concluded his letter with a reference to MSNBC: “This is irresponsible journalism and sadly, indicative of the level of objectivity we have witnessed at NBC News this election cycle. . . . We are concerned that your News Division is following MSNBC’s lead in abandoning non-partisan coverage of the Presidential race.” (Davis’s letter prompted a “Special Comment” in which Olbermann told McCain to “grow up.”)

The longtime employee of MSNBC I talked to—the one who told me the story about Olbermann and his door—says it’s a mistake to talk about MSNBC and NBC’s News Division as if they were two different things. “We are NBC News,” he says. “We’re in the same building. We’re staffed by the same people. We use the same cameras, the same tapes. There is no difference. *That* should be their critique.”

Meanwhile, the perilous state of the traditional network-news broadcast has undermined those at NBC News who are troubled by MSNBC’s creeping partisanship. The former NBC exec I talked to tells me, “There’s panic at NBC News that Keith is going to destroy the brand, but there’s even greater panic that the brand is going to be destroyed anyway.”

TO THE CABLE STATION

Can NBC News be saved? There are signs that all is not lost. For one thing, Olbermann has yet to do a single “essay” on the *NBC Nightly News* that hasn’t involved sports. Some insiders suggest that’s a sign that Brian Williams is making sure Olbermann doesn’t bring his whack-job politics onto the network’s flagship news show.

Then there’s NBC’s election coverage. There’s no doubt that Obama “got tremendous coverage during the primary elections, the best we’ve ever seen over a long period of time,” says S. Robert Lichter of the Center for Media and Public Affairs. Lichter’s organization found that NBC News stood out for its relentlessly negative coverage of Hillary. It was also during the primaries that NBC News correspondent Lee Cowan famously told Brian Williams, “It’s almost hard to remain objective [covering Obama], because it’s infectious.”

But Lichter’s organization did a follow-up study that looked only at the media’s coverage of Obama since he secured the Democratic nomination in June. This study showed that once the primaries were over, all of the networks started covering Obama more critically, but no network news show—including the first, newsier half of Fox News’s *Special Report with Brit Hume*—covered Obama more negatively than *NBC Nightly News*. Lichter attributes the general trend to the “build ’em up, bring ’em down” cycle of presidential-election coverage. “Eventually media candidates stumble,” he says. “They get greater scrutiny as they become more likely to become president.”

But the fact that this phenomenon was most observable at NBC News could mean that some journalists there are finally pushing back against MSNBC’s pro-Obama bias, although there’s no way to tell. Lichter says, “In general, I’ve dismissed that argument [that liberal networks get tough on Democrats to counter perceptions of bias], but certainly this is a touchy area for [NBC] right now. . . . It wouldn’t surprise me if the upper echelon at NBC News is working overtime to make sure that they don’t get sucked into that vortex of opinionated coverage.”

But it’s an uphill fight: Olbermann’s influence at the network is strong and growing. For evidence, consider the fate of Dan Abrams. Abrams started at MSNBC in 1997 as a legal correspondent and served as the network’s general manager for a little over a year. Following Scarborough’s move to mornings, Abrams stepped down as GM and created *Verdict with Dan Abrams* to replace Scarborough’s old show.

Abrams tried hard to play along with MSNBC’s new hard-Left tone by focusing on legal stories that put Republicans in the worst possible light. He created a feature called “Bush League Justice” about the administration’s supposed abuses of power, and another called “Teflon John” arguing that the media are biased in favor of McCain. But no matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t make his show left-wing enough for Keith Olbermann.

Olbermann wanted MSNBC to give a TV show to Rachel Maddow, a host on the left-wing radio network Air America. Maddow is by all accounts a friendly and intelligent commentator, but she is also one of the Left’s most strident partisans. Keith loves her, and he insisted that she get the 9 P.M. slot right after his. When the news finally broke that MSNBC was replacing *Verdict* with a show for Rachel Maddow, it was obvious that Olbermann had orchestrated the move; nevertheless, Olbermann couldn’t resist the opportunity to brag openly about what he had done, to demonstrate to the left-wing bloggers how much power he had acquired with their help. He wrote a post on his Daily Kos blog announcing Maddow’s hiring, in which he proudly proclaimed, “Yes, I had something to do with it.”

Because whatever Keith wants, Keith gets. **NR**

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Deadly Threat of a Nuclear-Armed Iran

What can the world, what can the USA, what can Israel do about it?

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has declared publicly – not once, but repeatedly – that Israel must be "wiped off the map." That effort, the destruction of Israel, seems to be the main goal of Iranian policy. When Iranian missiles are paraded through the streets of Tehran, the destination "to Jerusalem" is clearly stenciled on them.

What are the facts?

A death wish for Israel. Ahmadinejad and the ayatollah who is the "supreme leader" have publicly mused that one or two nuclear bombs would obliterate Israel, but that, though it would cause devastating damage and millions of casualties, Iran would survive Israel's retaliatory attack. Iran is a huge country, with about 60 million inhabitants, so they are probably correct. And who can doubt that those religious fanatics would not hesitate to allow the destruction of much of their country and to sacrifice a third or even one-half of their population in order to eliminate the hated Jewish state. When our country was entangled with the Soviet Union in the bitter 40-year long "cold war," with both sides having sufficient nuclear weapons to destroy the opponent's country and its people, things were kept in place by MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction. However "evil" the leaders of the Soviet Union (the "Evil Empire") may have been, there was one great consolation and assurance: They were not crazy. But the Iranians and other Muslims are crazies, as we understand the concept. Because they take instructions directly from Allah, who tells them to kill the Jews and other infidels, whatever the cost.

> "An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense."

Israel has no problem with Iran. They share no borders and have no territorial dispute. In fact, they face common Arab enemies and should be natural allies, as they indeed were under the Shah. Iran's death wish for Israel is based entirely on religious fanaticism. In contrast even to the intractable North Koreans, the determination of the Iranians is immutable. It cannot be changed by persuasion, by diplomacy, by sanctions or by threats.

Once Iran is in possession of nuclear weapons, it will not only be a deadly danger to Israel, but to all of the Middle East and to virtually all of Europe. The flow of oil from the Middle East, the lifeblood of the industrialized world, would be totally under its control and so would be the economies of all nations of the world, very much including the United States.

What is to be done? In 1981, then prime minister of Israel Menachem Begin, being aware of Iraq's nuclear ambitions and looming realization of those ambitions, decided that its nuclear reactor at Osiraq had to be destroyed. The IAF (Israeli Air Force) accomplished that in a daring and unprecedented raid. Iraq's nuclear capability was eliminated in one stroke, never to rise up again. Israel had done the world an enormous service. Had it not been for Israel's decisive action, the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait and, without question, also of Saudi Arabia and its enormous oil fields, and, for that matter, of Iran, could not have been prevented. Saddam Hussein would have been the ruler of the world.

The solution to the deadly threat that Iran poses to the world is obvious. Of course, diplomacy and persuasion, threats and promises, sticks and carrots – every possible means short of military action – should be used until it becomes clear even to the most obdurate that nothing can deviate Iran from its chosen path of becoming a nuclear power and to dominate the Middle East.

There is reason to believe that the people of Iran, especially the young people, oppose the oppressive and theocratic regime of their country and are hostile to the mullahs who control everything. But the government has the tools of power firmly in its hands. It controls the instruments of coercion – it can kill people and it controls the oil money. While it would be most desirable and in the interest of the world to be able to foment an overthrow of the Iranian regime, that is an unrealistic and unattainable prospect.

Regrettably, there is only one solution to the terrible dilemma confronting the world, the unacceptable danger of a nuclear-armed Iran. The terror, the destruction and the 60 million dead of World War II could have been prevented at several times during the Nazi regime. But the Allied powers, under the leadership of Britain's prime minister Neville Chamberlain, opted for appeasement and for "peace in our time." We cannot afford to make that same mistake again. The world must give Iran an ultimatum: Desist immediately from the development of nuclear weapons; if you do not, we shall destroy the facilities that produce them. There still is a window of opportunity to do that. That window may close very soon. But who would do the job? The United States would be the obvious choice. But if the United States were in accord, Israel could do it, just as it did the job in 1981 in destroying Iraq's nuclear potential once and for all.

An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of "anticipatory self-defense," recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense. Nobody really knows for sure how far Iran is from reaching its goal — six months. six years? The experts disagree. But if Iran is not stopped now, it may well be too late not very long from now.

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■ 2008

The Case For McCain

The Republican nominee offers what voters have demanded

RAMESH PONNURU

IT is nearly axiomatic in modern American political history that the stage for transformative presidential elections is set by the congressional elections that precede them: the Republican rout in 1958 leading to the Kennedy-Johnson years; the Republican resurgence in 1966 presaging Richard Nixon's breaking of the New Deal majority two years later; the triumph of hawkish, tax-cutting Republicans in 1978 preparing the way for Ronald Reagan's landslide in 1980. Only occasionally has the second act failed to take place. In 1994, for example, Republicans took control of Congress for the first time in 40 years, but they failed to defeat Bill Clinton's reelection in 1996.

Democrats and liberals are hoping that the 2006 election will conform to the rule rather than become another exception. They took control of the Senate and the House that November. Republicans had not lost as many seats in the Senate since 1986, or in the House since the post-Watergate election of 1974. Democrats tend to think that the 2006 election represented a broad and deep rejection of the Republican party and a significant leftward move by voters.

Believing they now have the public behind them, the Democrats look forward to having control of the elected branches of the federal government for the first time since the first two years of the Clinton administration. This time, the party will be more unified ideologically, because its majority will include fewer conservative southern Democrats. The party will thus be able to enact national health care, an item that has been on the liberal agenda for more than six decades. It will also be able to appoint liberal judges who will implement other elements of that agenda for decades into the future.

The glitch in this program is its starting point: an incorrect interpretation of the 2006 elections. The public did not definitively reject all things Republican, let alone take the further step of embracing liberalism and the Democratic party. In making this point, I do not mean to endorse the theory that many of my fellow conservatives have adopted: that the public rejected Republicans in 2006 because it wanted a more ideologically conservative government. On this theory, the Republicans would have prospered if only they had cut spending and otherwise stuck to orthodox conservative policies.

A version of this essay appeared in *Get in the Booth: A Citizen's Guide to the 2008 Election*, edited by Larry J. Sabato.

Let me propose an explanation of what happened in 2006 that is less congenial to the activists in each party but seems more plausible than theirs. In the first place, the public was upset about the Iraq War. Most people do not like losing wars, and most people thought, correctly, that we were losing in Iraq at the time. They thought, also correctly, that President Bush and the Republican party he led were unwilling to acknowledge that we were losing, let alone to change course. This situation infuriated them.

Second, they were disgusted by the scandals that swirled around many Republican congressmen. Several of them had connections to a corrupt lobbyist, and two went to jail. Another was accused of abusing his mistress.

Third, the Republicans were not advancing any agenda to reform the dysfunctional parts of American life, from the tax code to the health-care system. In particular, the party had nothing to say to the working-class, socially conservative voters who had provided its margin of victory in the past. In 2004, newspapers had featured profiles of such voters, who could be found in large numbers in swing states such as Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Many of them opposed same-sex marriage and abortion or had other views on moral and social questions that made them displeased with the Democrats. But they also had economic concerns—they worried about their health-care bills, for example—and did not think the Republicans would offer them any help. So they were torn.

In 2004, enough of them backed Bush that he became the first presidential candidate to win an absolute majority since his father did it in 1988. In 2006, however, voters were not torn. The social issues were, for various reasons, not in play: For one thing, Democrats were running anti-abortion candidates themselves in conservative parts of the country, and were not advertising their liberalism on social issues in most other places. These socially conservative working-class voters, many of whom had been Democrats by family history, went for the Democrats.

All three of these factors—the ongoing failure in Iraq, corruption, and the absence of a reform agenda—came together to create an accurate public perception that Republicans had become more interested in holding on to power than in serving the public interest. The Mark Foley scandal, which hit the news about a month before the election, confirmed this impression. Foley, a Republican congressman from Florida, hit on young men who had previously worked as interns in the House. Republican leaders did not know about all of his activities. But it was obvious to even the most casual observer of the news that many Republican officials had at no stage of the story reacted the way a normal person would. Instead, they tried to figure out the political calculations—could they keep Foley's seat? would it be better to force him to resign?—and acted accordingly.

The Republicans, then, were unwilling to stop a foreign-policy disaster, to improve domestic policy, or to discipline their sleaziest colleagues, but they wanted to be reelected anyway. Not surprisingly, the worst offenders were not. The public rejected incompetence, indifference, corruption, and defeat. The public did not lurch leftward.

But Democrats are acting like it did. On issue after issue, they are running well to the left of public opinion and often to the left of the last Democratic administration. Barack Obama is more hostile to free trade than any Democratic presidential candidate in

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the last century. Never mind that trade barriers tend to hurt the poor, at home and abroad, the hardest. Obama pretends that the looming bankruptcy of Social Security can be solved entirely by raising taxes on the rich, and without reining in runaway spending at all. Former President Clinton, by contrast, freed trade and insisted that Social Security be made solvent without raising payroll taxes.

Under President Clinton, the top federal tax rate on income was 42.5 percent. President Bush lowered that rate to 37.9. Obama would go back to the Clinton rate, and then raise it some more, to 47.7 percent, to fix (actually, to fail to fix) Social Security. The top tax rate has not been that high in more than two decades. Obama wants to push through one of the sharpest tax-rate increases in U.S. history—and that's before piling on additional taxes to pay for national health care.

> If the public still wants today what it wanted in 2006—an end to a failed foreign policy, a renewal of clean government, and a start at domestic reform, but not a sharp turn to the left—then there is one logical candidate for it to back this November: John McCain.

Obama looks at Americans' concerns about losing their health insurance or not being able to afford it and imagines that the solution is to have the federal government remake the entire system and place itself at the center. Obama has co-sponsored legislation that decrees that abortion should be legal at any stage of pregnancy, and that taxpayers should have to pay for it. As a state legislator, he opposed a bill to make sure that infants born alive in botched abortions have legal protection.

The anger the public felt toward the GOP in 2006, anger that it still feels today, was not based on Republicans' reluctance to embrace this left-wing wish list.

UNDERSTANDING 2006

If the public still wants today what it wanted in 2006—an end to a failed foreign policy, a renewal of clean government, and a start at domestic reform, but not a sharp turn to the left—then there is one logical candidate for it to back this November: John McCain.

Let's start with the war in Iraq. Our politicians have served us very poorly. Most Republicans stuck with a failing strategy in Iraq for years out of party loyalty. The Democrats performed no better, and arguably worse. Many of them voted for the war even though they did not believe in it, because they thought it would be politically popular. As its popularity sank, they adjusted their positions to match the political needs of the moment: most ludicrously, when Sen. John Kerry, the Democrats' presidential candidate in 2004, declared that he had voted for a war-funding bill before he voted against it.

Senator McCain stood out from the pack. Perhaps because of his own record of military heroism, he took the question of war and peace seriously. He refused to offer blind support to a Republican president, he was willing to take the unpopular side of the issue, and he was consistently far-sighted and right.

McCain saw that Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq had posed a consistent problem for American security. It had committed genocide against its Kurdish population, invaded a neighbor to gain enormous influence over world oil markets and the power that would bring, and planned to assassinate a former president of the United States. International sanctions on Iraq were supposed to keep the regime "in a box." But sanctions were eroding. The international community was losing its will to enforce them. Our military presence in Saudi Arabia, designed to deter Iraq, was not going to be a sustainable policy toward either country.

Saddam Hussein was going to get out of his box. Even without nuclear weapons, he had been able to precipitate a war with the United States in 1991. Once he had gotten out from under sanctions, he would probably have resumed his quest for nuclear arms, which we interrupted with that war. McCain had no reason to disagree with most of the world's top intelligence services, which believed at the time of our invasion in 2003 that the regime was pursuing nuclear weapons. That intelligence turned out to be wrong. But McCain's case for regime change was not based solely on that intelligence, and his main argument holds up as well now as it did then.

While McCain supported the war, he was by no means a cheerleader for the Bush administration's strategy. As early as the fall of 2003, he was sharply questioning it. That strategy was based on the assumption that a "light footprint" on our part would make it easier for Iraqis to make political progress, and the country's political development would then lead to security improvements. For McCain, this theory, most closely associated with Bush's first defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, got things backward: Political progress was impossible in conditions of terrorism and sectarian violence. McCain agitated for more troops, a different strategy, and a new defense secretary.

He did so through 2004, when other Republicans, including the president, were saying that we should "stay the course." He did so through 2005 and 2006, when other Republicans, not to mention Democrats who had initially supported the war, began looking for ways to abandon Iraq. He argued that an American withdrawal would be both a humanitarian and a strategic disaster, but that keeping the existing strategy was no alternative.

Following the 2006 elections, Bush took McCain's advice and announced a "surge" that involved increasing troop levels and adopting a new strategy: Security would come first, classic counterinsurgency tactics would be deployed, and political development would then be able to proceed. McCain overlooked his past disagreements with the president and became the most vocal congressional advocate of the surge, turning back Democratic attempts to stop it. (The Senate Democratic leader, Harry Reid, had declared that the war was already lost and had called the surge a failure before it even began.) McCain was a more effective advocate than the highly unpopular president.

Over the following year and a half, security in Iraq has improved and political progress, although uneven and too slow, has begun to take place. Victory in Iraq, defined as a peaceful and decent Iraqi government that can sustain itself, is by no means assured. But it at least looks possible now. If it occurs it will be a major strategic advance for the United States—and McCain will deserve a good deal of the credit. The senator has shown excellent judgment throughout this conflict. But even those who disagree with McCain about the war should be able to see that he has also demonstrated a sterling political character. He put the interests of his country, as he saw them, first, and ignored both polls and party. He persevered when the cause looked hopeless.

On the war, then, McCain stands for something better than the 2006 Republicans (defeat) or the 2008 Democrats (surrender). He stands for something better than the 2006 Republicans did on ethics, too. He denounced the signs of growing corruption in Washington as they appeared. He advocated reforms to prevent such corruption. He did more than anyone else to enact regulation of campaign finance, and he has fought as hard as anyone else to stop congressmen from being able to direct federal spending to their favored interests, a practice called "earmarking." He admits that his record is not perfect; no politician's is. To tell the truth, I am not convinced that his reforms of campaign finance and earmarking are wise. But that McCain will have zero tolerance for corruption in his administration is easy to believe—his record is far stronger than Obama's—and Americans should weigh that in his favor as they vote.

McCAIN'S DOMESTIC AGENDA

Finally, McCain differs from the 2006 Republicans in being eager to adopt domestic reforms, particularly of health care. His health-care plan is designed to make health coverage more affordable, to let people take it with them from job to job more easily, and to let them take control of their health policies from employers. It is bolder than that of any previous Republican presidential nominee, and it is better than the leading Democratic plans.

It is estimated that more than 20 million people who do not have health insurance now would be able to get it under McCain's plan—and his plan involves no tax increases, no massive new government programs, and no threat that the government will

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eventually ration care. His plan has two steps. First, he takes the tax break that now goes to people who get coverage through their work and extends it to everyone, whether they get it through work or buy it themselves. Second, he lets people buy their insurance from out-of-state firms, thus helping residents of states where regulation has made coverage expensive. The first reform helps individuals participate in the market for health insurance, while the second ensures that most will have attractive policies to buy.

Finally, McCain avoids the ideological overreach of his opponents. Senator Obama talks a lot about "change" and transcending our differences. But he has had one of the most liberal voting records in the Senate, and has voted with his party more often than even its Senate leader, Harry Reid. He will provide no check on the ambitions of a Democratic Congress. McCain, by contrast, has often broken with his party and worked with the Democrats. When he errs as president, it will not be a result of excessive partisanship.

McCain says that he will appoint judges who will follow the law rather than forcing either liberal or conservative policies down people's throats. He does not seek judges who will outlaw abortion, for example. He wants judges who will let the voters of each state set the abortion policy they favor, whether it be permissive, restrictive, or something in between. Obama wants judges who will not let voters decide to ban any type of abortion, even partial-birth abortion.

Like Obama and most Americans, McCain opposes same-sex marriage. He does not want to amend the Constitution to ban it, as many Republicans do. But he favors the Defense of Marriage Act, which lets states that do not want same-sex marriage keep their laws as they are. Obama wants to repeal that law, and does not want states that have had same-sex marriage foisted on them by the courts to restore their old laws.

On other issues, McCain's views are generally conservative—which, from my perspective, is a good thing. He has been a strong free trader. He says that he will not raise taxes. He wants to bring entitlement programs under control and allow young people to invest some of the taxes they pay into them so that they can provide for their own retirements instead of depending on the government.

Senator Obama has been involved in national politics for a few years, and those years have not been distinguished. His only achievements are political: He has raised a lot of money, inspired a lot of liberals, and narrowly beaten Hillary Clinton in the Democratic primaries. Senator McCain, by contrast, has, among other things, done a lot to rescue the country from losing a war. Senator Obama offers the public a stale liberalism garnished with well-written speeches. McCain offers a fresher approach that is conservative but rarely rigid and never partisan.

The public turned on Republicans in 2006 because they were losing in Iraq, tolerating corruption in Washington, and detached from the economic struggles of ordinary Americans. McCain stands for a winning strategy in Iraq and clean government. Having staked out a strong position on health care, McCain should now apply that bold, reforming energy to other issues that confound Americans, such as the tax code. If he does, and he finds a way to explain his policies so that people can understand the choice before them, he can win the presidential election, even in a year that is supposed to belong to the Democrats. **NR**

AT WAR II

In Victory's Direction

Where we're headed in Iraq, and why we must arrive

BING WEST

IN July, five American soldiers died in action in Iraq. That's the lowest number since the war began in March of 2003. A prudent leader, Gen. David Petraeus has warned his commanders not to claim success yet. Nonetheless, in traveling around the country in early August at Petraeus's invitation, I found the progress on the military front to be remarkable. It was my 15th trip to Iraq in six years, and after the hard fighting I had witnessed in the past, the contrast was striking. That raises three questions: How did the war turn around? What are the current conditions? And where do we go from here?

In the spring of 2003, the United States quickly won control of Iraq from Saddam Hussein. Afterwards, however, it failed to prevent the growth of diverse insurgent forces. By 2004 most of the Sunni population from Baghdad west to the Syrian border and north to Mosul supported, or at least tolerated, resistance cells and Qaeda-led terrorists in their midst. The U.S. responded by cracking down, and its operations were rough enough to antagonize the Sunni population, even though it avoided the draconian restrictions that armies have historically employed to control populations. By the end of 2004, the U.S. was thinking about getting out.

The U.S. military settled on a mission of handing off the war to newly formed Iraqi-army battalions. Unfortunately, these battalions weren't up to the task, and they received no leadership from two successive governments that were inept and sectarian, having been elected from lists supported by the block vote of the Shiite majority. By the spring of 2006, the coalition was losing on the two major fronts that accounted for most of the fighting. In Anbar Province, to the west, the extremist Sunni al-Qaeda in Iraq controlled the population; in Baghdad, to the east, death squads drawn from the Shiite militias and the police were driving out the Sunnis, while al-Qaeda's suicide bombings continued. The situation was grim, and to those back home in America, it seemed destined to keep getting worse.

In fact, conditions were ripe for a turnaround. In the fall of 2006, tribal leaders on the western front (Anbar) turned against al-Qaeda. Back in 2004, the same tribes had welcomed al-Qaeda, with its stirring call to jihad. Anbar, it was then thought, would be the last province to be pacified, if it ever was. But that judgment didn't factor in a staffing policy that turned out to be enormously important: The Marines were sending the same battalions back to the same cities on seven-month tours.

Mr. West is a former assistant secretary of defense and Marine. His third book on Iraq is entitled *The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics and the Endgame in Iraq*.

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Over the years, the Americans and Iraqis grew to know one another, and Marine tactics improved as they became familiar with the area and its people. The Marines did their best to keep the peace with small foot patrols as the population went through a cycle of opposing them (2004), resenting them (2005), and finally seeking their protection (2006) after experiencing al-Qaeda's rule. Like Robespierre in 1793, al-Qaeda had turned into a terror machine after seizing power.

The key to the turnaround on the western front was a strategy of partnership between local leaders and U.S. officers. Insurgencies grow from the bottom up; they must be defeated by turning the population against the rebels village by village, city by city. No general, no matter how brilliant, can accomplish this by maneuvering his army. Instead, the army and the police must spread out and remain among the population.

Outside the cities, the distances between the farmlands were so huge that Qaeda operatives could move freely. The Sunni tribes, however, under the remarkable leadership of Sheik Abu Risa Sattar, gradually united in rebellion against al-Qaeda. The locals knew who the extremists were; the Americans brought the hammer. After the tribes, now aligned with the Americans, had been successful in killing some Qaeda members, the bulk of the Sunni population joined with them. Al-Qaeda, whose mobility depended upon cars, couldn't move inside the cities where police checkpoints were improving, and couldn't hide in the countryside, where tribal posses were pursuing them. By the fall of 2006, similar local partnerships had sprung up across the west—in the cities of al-Qaim, Haditha, Ramadi, and even truculent Fallujah. The war in the west had turned before President Bush announced his surge strategy in January of 2007.

When Petraeus took command in February 2007, he was impressed to see that thousands of Sunnis, many of them ex–resistance fighters, had joined tribal auxiliaries and the police in Anbar to oppose their former allies. He authorized U.S. commanders to recruit and pay similar irregular forces across Iraq. Al-Qaeda fled, Shiite death-squad attacks ceased, and a further benefit was that these partnerships placed Americans in daily contact with local leaders, who told them about poor services. In turn, the Americans pressured the Iraqi government to respond to local needs.

The turnaround on the eastern front—around Baghdad—followed in 2007. The same sorts of partnership emerged, shaped by three decisions at the top. First, President Bush sent a "surge" of 30,000 troops, mainly to control Baghdad. Second, their commander, Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, chose to deploy most of them in belts around the capital to crush al-Qaeda. Third, inside Baghdad, Petraeus moved his soldiers off their large bases and into neighborhoods, especially along the fault lines where Sunnis were being driven out or where al-Qaeda was in control.

In and around Baghdad, Petraeus's strategy of deploying American soldiers in largely Sunni locales had succeeded by the end of 2007. As had been true on the western and eastern fronts, the necessary antecedent was a change in attitude of the Sunni population after experiencing al-Qaeda's whip hand, which contrasted sharply with the Americans' much more humane approach. With informants coming forward in every neighborhood, al-Qaeda was squeezed out of province after province. Odierno kept expanding the population-protection coverage, driving al-Qaeda to make its last stand in the north around Mosul, where heavy-handed Kurdish influence had antagonized the Sunni population and provided a nesting ground for the hard-pressed al-Qaeda extremists.

Illustrative of the military progress was the situation in the Muhamadiya district, south of Baghdad, previously called the Triangle of Death. There, the 3rd Brigade of the 101st Air Assault Division, having recruited 20,000 Sunnis into the Sons of Iraq (a collection of neighborhood-watch groups paid modest amounts by the Americans), was partnered with the 17th Iraqi-army division. By mid-2008, conditions had so improved that Col. Dominic Caraccilo, the brigade commander, devised a plan to steadily reduce his presence from 15 infantry companies (three battalions) to five (one battalion). That's roughly one U.S. company per Iraqi brigade in a vast sector, which covered 500 square miles holding 150,000 Shiites and 450,000 Sunnis. The shrunken brigade would be called a "transition task force."

The critical link

SHANE A. CUOMO

DIFFERENT TRIBES, DIFFERENT METHODS

But in Shiite areas under militia control—like Sadr City, which was run by the renegade preacher Moqtada al-Sadr and his Jaish al-Mahdi (Mahdi Army)—the situation was entirely different. Sadr's political coalition in the national assembly had delivered the critical votes to elect Maliki in April of 2006. Throughout the second half of 2006, Maliki prevented coalition troops from systematically attacking Shiite death squads, many belonging to the Mahdi Army. Then in May of 2007, Vice President Cheney flew to Baghdad to pressure Maliki. He responded by letting the coalition attack the Iranian-backed special groups within the Mahdi Army, which were killing Americans. But large areas inside Baghdad, like Sadr City, remained off-limits to a full-scale American presence due to both Maliki's reluctance and the American designation of al-Qaeda as the main focus of attention for U.S. forces.

For years the Jaish al-Mahdi had shaken down its fellow Shiites in Baghdad, Basra, and elsewhere. While the Sadr movement as an ideology offered hope to the poor and thus retained some appeal, the thuggish behavior of its leaders eventually deprived them of the population's respect. Petraeus largely left Sadrist areas to Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki to deal with, and at first this strategy did not accomplish much.

A partial turning point came in August of 2007, when the Mahdi

Catholic *ATTITUDE*

Have you ever wondered why so much of Catholicism is gutless, anemic, and wimpy these days? Is it because there are so many touchie-feelie types in the priesthood? You know, "Let's all hold hands now and sing 'All Shall Be Well,' and then let's give one another a big hug." It's like being back at some goofball summer camp.

And we get campfire sermonettes with all the substance and nutrition of a marshmallow. Where's the beef? We rarely, if ever, hear anything about the Church's teachings on abortion, contraception, euthanasia, homosexuality, premarital sex, pornography, consumerism, the indissolubility of marriage, Just War doctrine, or Hell.

But we *do* hear about the Church's "controversial" teachings from the newspapers and the evening news, which of course put the worst spin on them and never give the rationale for them. Rarely will a priest or religious instructor explain *why* the Church teaches as she does, much less with conviction and passion. How pathetic!

We sit around hearing from fey priests about tolerance and diversity, and how all religions are equally true — but since the various religions teach radically different things, that's patent nonsense. Hey, it's time to get rid of those pablum pushers and replace them with real men.

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Among those who've written for us are Walker Percy, Alice von Hildebrand, Piers Paul Read, Anne Barbeau Gardiner, Tom Bethell, and Michael S. Rose (whose book *Goodbye, Good Men* exposed the homosexual rot in many of our seminaries).

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Army, during a fight with rival Shiite factions, killed a group of Shiites on pilgrimage in Karbala. Maliki turned up the heat by leading an armored force into the city and personally arresting a top Sadrist. With his militia losing popular support, Sadr grandly declared a "ceasefire," as was his custom whenever threatened. Maliki emerged more powerful, but when the crisis passed, so did his zeal, and he relaxed the pressure against the militias.

Then, in late March of 2008, he changed course yet again. In a bizarre episode, Maliki himself directed a sudden attack against the Mahdi Army, which was entrenched in the key southern city of Basra. A rumor had circulated that a cabal of Shiite politicians was encouraging the Sadrists to launch rocket attacks against the Green Zone in Baghdad. This would demonstrate Maliki's weakness, whereupon the politicians would orchestrate a vote in the assembly to remove him from office.

Maliki's abrupt move against Sadr's stronghold in Basra angered and surprised the Americans. The offensive faltered due to lack of preparation as well as command confusion: "The Iraqi operations center," an American general told me, "consisted of Maliki with eight cell phones yelling at his generals in a separate building with four cell phones." Rather than let the offensive fail or drag out, Petraeus sent special forces, electronic and surveillance intelligence assets, and air controllers to help the Iraqi battalions. With airborne video capturing the movement, day or night, of anyone stepping outside with a weapon, and attack helicopters waiting to pounce, the overmatched Mahdi Army broke apart.

At the same time, guerrillas inside Sadr City were launching Iranian-supplied rockets at the homes of Iraqi politicians in the Green Zone. U.S. ambassador Ryan Crocker persuaded Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish politicians to unite behind Maliki against what had become a common threat. Petraeus deployed American units alongside Iraqi battalions to occupy the rocket-launching points and wall off the southern portion of Sadr City.

As had happened in Basra, Mahdi Army elements became targets for American units expert in detecting movement, identifying those with weapons, and calculating the geometries of fire. Several hundred militia members were killed. The Sadrists learned once again, as they had during similar battles in 2004, that challenging Americans to an open gunfight was not a prudent tactic. The Mahdi leaders fled, and Maliki sent Iraqi battalions to occupy Sadr City, without American units.

By the summer of 2008, the military situation had improved dramatically. Ambassador Crocker cited what he called "a virtuous cycle": The Shiites had seen the Sunnis turn against al-Qaeda, and the Sunnis had seen Maliki and the Iraqi army turn against Sadr's militia. In both cases, the desire for peace and freedom had overcome factionalism.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq had been attrited from about 4,000 to 2,000 and driven from most parts of the country. The much larger Sunni resistance movement, composed of dozens of small, independent cells, had largely collapsed. The Sunni tribes had allied with the Americans, though they still expressed distrust and hostility toward what they called "Maliki's Iranian government" for its perceived pro-Shiite bias. About 100,000 Sons of Iraq had been recruited across the country; each was paid about $300 a month from American military funds. Meanwhile, the Shiite extremists in the Mahdi Army were isolated, with about 500 receiving terror training in Iran from Iranian and Hezbollah specialists. The bulk of the Mahdi Army was leaderless, with the quixotic Sadr playing computer games in Iran, and the Shiite population wanted no more of his greedy, brutal toughs.

IRAQ TODAY

While the situation in Iraq has improved greatly over the last two years, many challenges remain, both military and political. On the military side, the relationship between the Iraqi army and the police is fractious in some locales and acceptable in others. The leadership of the national police, a disgraced organization that was complicit in killing Sunnis two years ago, has been replaced, and recent assessments have been positive. In theory, Iraqi-army battalions are supposed to withdraw from the cities as the police demonstrate competence. In practice, a combination of politics, distrust, and factionalism indicates that it will be years before the balance between the police and the military is resolved. Maliki, in a move to centralize power in his hands, is pushing for provincial operations centers that will include police and military commanders, both reporting to him.

Levels of capability and confidence vary from one Iraqi division to another, but overall, the Iraqi army is in no rush to see the U.S. units depart. The battles against forces aligned with al-Qaeda in the northern provinces of Diyala and Nineveh, including Mosul, are far from finished. In Diyala, too much civil power resides in the hands of Shiite officials who continue to repress the Sunnis. In Nineveh, the provincial government is terribly led and the Kurds have been unwilling to share power equitably with the Sunnis. Those provinces are a year to 18 months away from sustainable security without an American combat presence.

Out west in Anbar Province, long the stronghold of the Sunni resistance, the anti-Qaeda "Awakening" of the tribes has blossomed into a political party that opposes both Maliki's administration and the Iraqi Islamic party, a Sunni organization elected in 2005 when most Sunnis boycotted elections. (The IIP is part of Maliki's governing coalition.) The tribes, confident of winning the next provincial election, accuse the IIP of theft on a grand scale.

The Sunni tribes insist that a continued U.S. presence is indispensable. As Sheik Ali Hatim of the Jabouri tribe put it, "Everything we have—fuel, schools, salaries—is because of the Americans. We told Senator Obama, 'Don't pull out the Americans.' Without them, we will fight." According to Sheik Hatim, in his tribal area around Ramadi, 477 Iraqis in the last two years have confessed to working for al-Qaeda. He didn't say what happened to them.

Petraeus describes the recent military gains as fragile. Colin Powell once explained the U.S. situation in Iraq with the analogy of breaking a vase at Pottery Barn and thus being charged for it. The Iraqi army is the glue that has stuck the vase back together. The American military is the tape around the vase that must be carefully peeled away after the glue sets. If the tape is ripped away too quickly, the vase will fall apart again.

Given the progress on the military front, politics—working out who gets what without resorting to violence—has emerged as the main area of effort for the U.S. Provincial elections were supposed to be held by the end of 2008, but the assembly failed to pass an election law when it could not reach a compromise with Kurdish leaders about the status of Kirkuk. The assembly will try again in the fall, but many Shiite and Sunni representatives, having failed

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for two years to deliver basic services, will want to delay an election that could throw them out of power.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Maliki has been steadily amassing power in the central government (meaning his immediate office). Maliki is notoriously overconfident. For two years, President Bush reassured him with video-phone calls every few weeks. This undercut the clout of Ambassador Crocker, because Maliki could claim to listen to no one except the president of the United States, who treated him as an equal. Maliki has also bumptiously discounted the American military role in staving off serious setbacks in Basra and in Sadr City, wrongly believing he can keep the security situation under control with the Iraqi army under his thumb.

Maliki is also sectarian. Deeply distrustful of the Sunnis, he has seen no reason to bring even a modest portion of the Sons of Iraq (some of whom have Qaeda involvement in their past) into the security forces. For over a year, Petraeus has been trying to persuade Maliki to accept at least 20,000 SOI members into the police and army, but Maliki refuses to consider it. Recently, to the Americans' distress, he has moved to arrested SOI and Awakening leaders.

THE WAY AHEAD

The first major hurdle lying ahead will be negotiating a status-of-forces agreement (SOFA) between the U.S. and Iraq. This will take effect when the current U.N. charter, which authorizes the coalition's presence and use of force, expires at the end of this year. Maliki is insisting on very tough terms, including transfer of about 15,000 prisoners to Iraqi control (which could expose Sunnis to undue harm and possibly lead to Shiites being improperly released) and advance notice and coordination with Iraqi-government officials before launching operations (which will result in leaks and long delays).

An endgame to avoid

BETTMANN/CORBIS

The most extreme demand—that U.S. soldiers be subject to Iraqi laws and prosecution—will be rejected. But Maliki is also insisting on timelines, such as the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from urban areas by 2010. Whatever the final details, it is certain that Maliki will insist on a SOFA that reduces American leverage and hastens the exit of other members of the coalition, who will be reluctant to enter tedious discussions with Iraqi negotiators who don't care whether they stay or go.

On September 16, Petraeus moves up from his current job as commander of Multi-National Force–Iraq to take over U.S. Central Command, where he will recommend how to balance forces between Iraq and Afghanistan. Petraeus's former deputy, Gen. Raymond Odierno, is taking over in Iraq. This will be his third tour in that country. The next U.S. president will inherit a stable but fragile military situation in Iraq.

The major challenge will be political, with both provincial and national elections—including the post of prime minister—looming. The question that Stephen Hadley, President Bush's national-security adviser, raised in a memo in November 2006 still applies: "We need to determine if Prime Minister Maliki is both willing and able to rise above the sectarian agendas being promoted by others. Do we and Prime Minister Maliki share the same vision for Iraq?"

If Iraqis believe America is abandoning them, their nation will fall apart. Our involvement in Vietnam ended in 1975 when the last helicopter flew out of Saigon, leaving behind a panic-stricken mob at the mercy of their conquerors. Alternatively, the endgame can occur when things quiet down enough that the press places Iraq on the back pages, as it is now doing. If Iraqis believe America is standing by them, they will hold together and the violence will continue to abate as our forces gradually leave.

Some American forces will be needed for years, in steadily decreasing numbers. Senator Obama's pledge to remove all combat brigades within 16 months, first made when a civil war was raging two years ago, is not relevant to today's circumstances; the definition of "combat" is too elastic to be relevant. The model shown by Colonel Caraccilo, in which a brigade of three battalions is gradually reduced to a single-battalion transition task force, is likely to be widely duplicated.

Wars turn on confidence. Iraqis—soldiers, police, and citizens—need to believe that Americans will aid them in extremis, though that need will diminish as the Iraqis learn to stand on their own feet. To use Petraeus's phrase, the definition of victory is "a sustainable security arrangement . . . that Iraqis can take over by themselves."

Maintaining and reinforcing a stable Iraq is in the economic and security interests of the United States. We can and should gradually withdraw most of our troops; the Iraqi politicians will see to that in any event. And as we do so, we must continue to reassure the Iraqis that we stand beside them.

The burden and pain of Iraq were borne by a relatively small number, like Jim and Maria Simpson, who lost their son Abe, as well as Abe's best friend and cousin, Jonathan. Both died fighting in the Habbaniyah–Fallujah corridor. "Just a few families stepped forward," Jim Simpson told me. "I think we're losing the sense of being a nation." Losing the sense of being a nation should concern us all. We have fought the war in Iraq as a nation divided. If we are still this divided in the next war, there is a good chance we will be defeated.

Public support will be the key to any future conflict. Wars are strewn with blunders, and mistakes are not a reason to abandon the mission. Yet as the American military has adapted continually to overcome its mistakes and those of the government, American society has became more divided. As Rome and Athens demonstrated two millennia ago, every military, no matter how strong its internal code, eventually mirrors its society. It was easy to criticize the Bush administration for its faults; it is harder to decide how our society can retain sufficient unity to be the world's strongest tribe. **NR**

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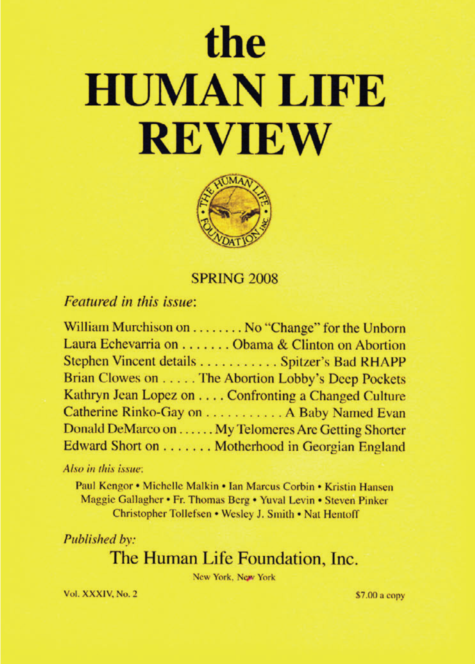

the
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SPRING 2008

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the bent pin

FLORENCE KING

Adultery through Green Eyeshades

In last month's column I called John Edwards sexless, and the next day he confessed to an affair. If you think that proves me wrong, guess again.

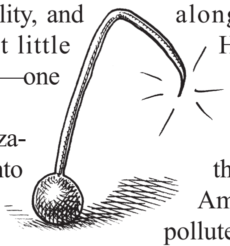
Take, for example, his statement. In it he announced that he had been unfaithful to his wife in 2006, but not in 2007. Okay, we heard it the first time, but to make sure we heard it right he said it again. And again. No, he reiterated, he did not commit adultery in 2007, just in 2006. So compelled was he to compare the two years that I found myself imagining him wearing the green eyeshade and cuff protectors of the old-time bookkeeper, totting up the sin column with a scratchy pen. Yes, the devil (red ink) was in the details back in 2006 but the angels (black ink) of his better nature took over in 2007. That's why bad things happened in 2006 and good things happened in 2007. It was all starting to sound like the placemats you get in Chinese restaurants: 2006 was the Year of the Adulterer but 2007 was the Year of the Husband.

Talk about sexless. It was as if the abdicating Edward VIII had said he could not discharge his duties as king "without the help and support of the woman I love in 1936." Never once did John Edwards fail to date his dates, until the whole country was invited to visualize Rielle Hunter held hostage in a pre-computerized public library, her date stamps tucked into a cardboard book pocket and glued to her derrière.

Fixating on the chronology of a love affair can be pretty sexy stuff. There's that never-to-be-forgotten day when everything was perfect, in bed and out. The cab driver was nice, the waiter was nice, and the sex better than anything before or since; we want to remember it all exactly as it happened, so we fixate on the smallest details and keep them in our memory files and thumb through them for the rest of our lives.

There is also a powerful sexuality behind the chronological fixations of an intelligent man trapped in a self-destructive passion who is driven to pinpoint his downfall—the "Blue Angel" syndrome, after the professor in the movie of the same name, for whom scholarly dignity was all. But memory files and self-destructive passions are for sexually mature adults, and we're talking about John Edwards—in kneepants, whose fixation on separating 2006 from 2007 had nothing to do with anything except avoiding the lines as he hopped down the sidewalk chanting, "Step on a crack, bring the cancer back."

When his wife's cancer is away John will stray; when it returns so does he. His statement that his affair was confined to 2006 "when the cancer was in remission" sounded positively blissful, so sure was he that this excused his infidelity, and was delivered with a modest little smile aimed at Both Americas—one for each of his faces.



I hope, for her sake, that Elizabeth Edwards's cancer will go into remission again, but meanwhile my brain has gone into regression. The trouble with the John Edwards story is that it zigs when you expect it to zag. Just when you think you are approaching the realm of the normal, the "Huh?" factor kicks in and you have to detour into dank terrain, there to try and make sense of the best-laid plans of mice.

I thought the moment had come when he said "I don't love her" and "I'm not the father"—incomplete sins, like incomplete forward passes, on a par with "I didn't inhale." But no. My "Huh?" moment was Edwards's five-hour meeting with Rielle Hunter at the Beverly Hills hotel, because it took me back 50 years to the first writing I ever did: first-person stories for the true-confessions magazines.

Some unfortunate women finish at ten cents a dance; I started at five cents a word. I could have made $250 out of the Edwards-Hunter tryst.

I Committed Adultery and Our Baby Saw It All!

Will Our Baby Remember It? I'll Never Forgive Myself, Never!

I Played the Slut in Front of My Own Daughter!

What sort of person would take a baby to a rendezvous? John Edwards, that's who. Some members of the media have hinted that it was Rielle Hunter's idea, or that of her lawyer or handlers, to trap Edwards in a photo-op, or to play on his heartstrings (hah!), or to compromise him somehow, but I don't believe it for a minute. I think Edwards told her to bring the kid along. He's such a prisoner of his own smarminess that he probably thought the addition of a baby would sanctify the meeting with a touch of family values. This way, if anybody saw the three of them together, it would seem as innocent as . . . well, as 2007.

Once the innocence was established in people's minds, he reasoned, it could only grow into more innocence, until it fairly oozed Middle American traditional values. It would remind everybody of those cute situations in old movies and early TV when the girl's kid brother tags along on her dates. It was Andy Hardy, it was Booth Tarkington's Penrod stories, it was the kind of warm-hearted stuff that happened on the banks of the Wabash and other good old American rivers before they got polluted. And don't forget the Labor Day picnic scene in *Picnic*: Everybody brought babies to that, remember? Show me a small-town picnic scene—even *Peyton Place* contains one!—and I'll show you a baby. On every pot.

This is the man that Rielle Hunter called "real and authentic," which tells us all we need to know about her mental abilities. This is why she can't figure out why he picked her. He could have had a multitude of sweet young things but he chose a 42-year-old who is one bleach job away from turning into one big split end, because his tumescent ego demands that he be the pretty one.

The other night on the Larry King show, Bill Maher called Edwards "our national punch line." He's that, but he's more. He's his own Viagra. **NR**

Florence King can be reached at P.O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, VA 22404.

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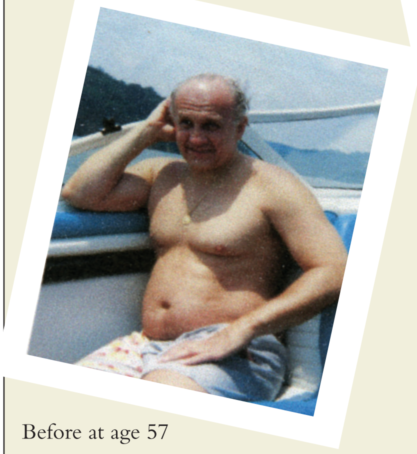
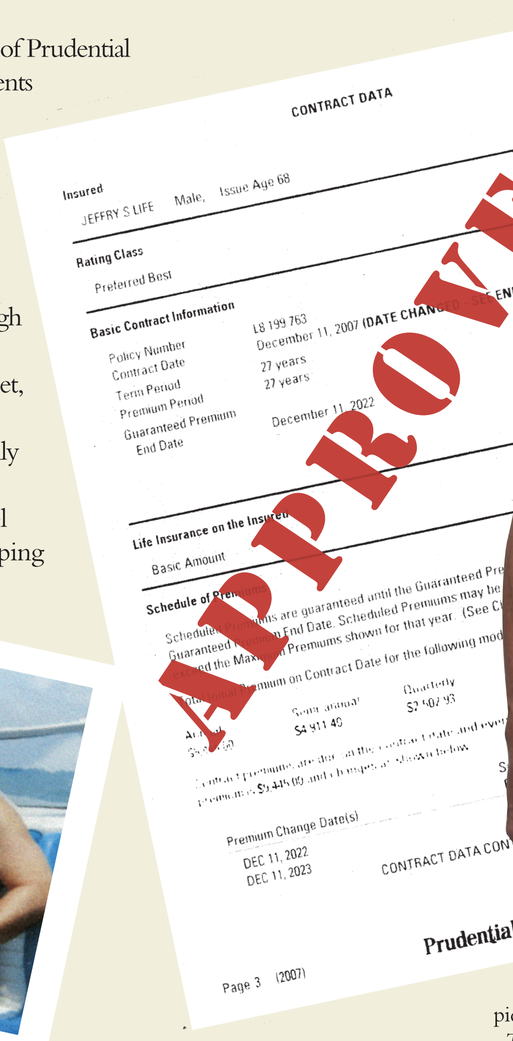


Before at age 57



CONTRACT DATA

Insured
JEFFRY S LIFE Male, Issue Age 68

Rating Class
Preferred Best

Basic Contract Information
Policy Number L8 199 763
Contract Date December 11, 2007 (DATE CHANGED - SEE ENDORSEM
Term Period 27 years
Premium Period 27 years
Guaranteed Premium End Date December 11, 2022

Life Insurance on the Insured
Basic Amount

Schedule of Premiums
Scheduled Premiums are guaranteed until the Guaranteed Pre
Guaranteed Premium End Date. Scheduled Premiums may be
exceed the Maximum Premiums shown for that year. (See C
Total Initial Premium on Contract Date for the following mod

Semi-annual $4 911 40
Quarterly $2 502 93

Premium Change Date(s)
DEC 11, 2022
DEC 11, 2023

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Page 3 (2007)

Jeff Life, MD,
pictured at age 67.
This photo has not been digitally enhanced.

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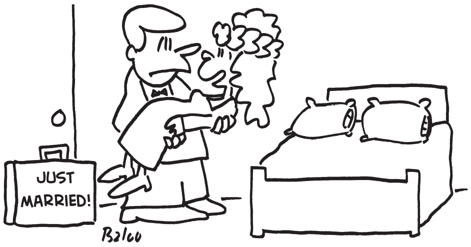
JUST MARRIED!
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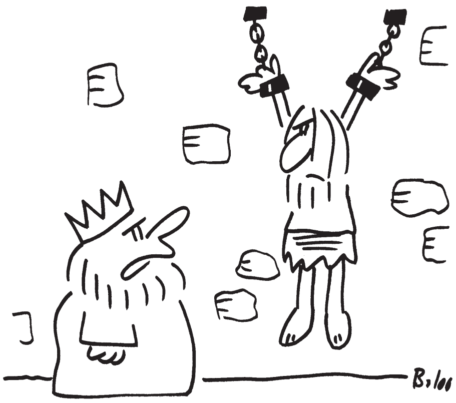
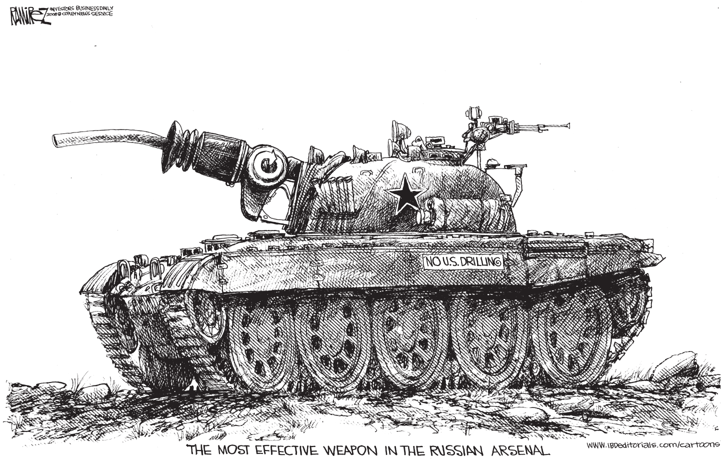
“I should warn you—I don’t have any tattoos.”



“This is supposed to be
an abusive relationship!”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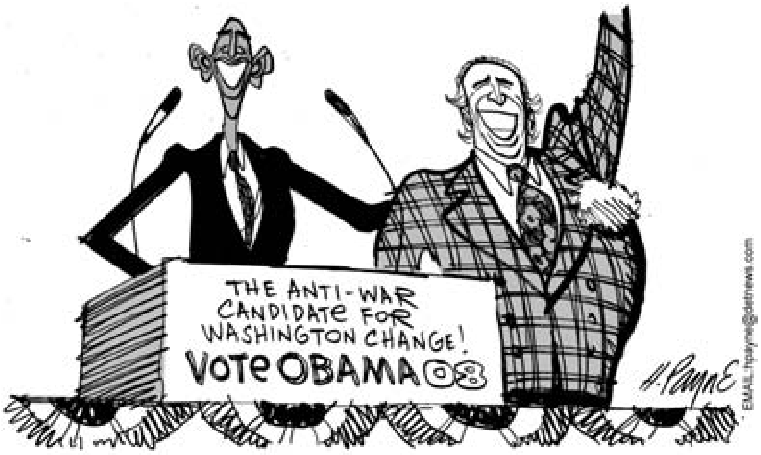
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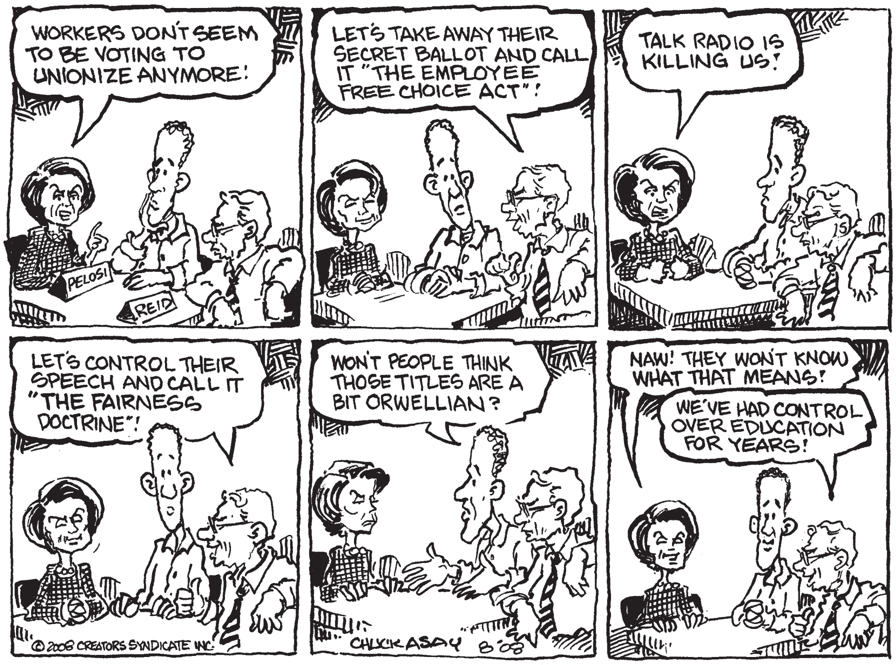
"SO I'VE NOMINATED PRO-WAR WASHINGTON DINOSAUR JOE BIDEN FOR VEEP!"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Like a picked flower cut from the source, we gradually wilt physically and mentally and become vulnerable to a host of degenerative diseases, that we simply weren't susceptible to in our early adult years.

Modern medical science now regards aging as a disease that is treatable and preventable and that "aging", the disease, is actually acompilation of various diseases and pathologies, from everything, like a rise in blood glucose and pressure to diabetes, skin wrinkling and so on. All of these aging symptoms can be stopped-and rolled back by maintaining Growth Hormone levels in the blood at the same levels HGH existed in the blood when we were 25 years old.

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the long view

ROB LONG

Official Transcript:
Larry King Live
October 10, 2008

LARRY KING: A special surprise tonight! The whole hour with Hillary Clinton!

BILL CLINTON: Larry?

LARRY KING: Whoops. And Bill Clinton! I didn't even know you were booked together!

HILLARY CLINTON: We weren't. But when you called—

BILL CLINTON: Can I just interject here for a moment? You didn't book me, Larry. I came along with my wife, because I love her and support her. And to answer whatever questions your callers have.

LARRY KING: What a treat! Tomorrow night! The cast of *Diff'rent Strokes* remembers Conrad Bain! From Marietta, Georgia, hello!

CALLER: Hi Larry! Hi Bill and Hillary!

BILL CLINTON: Hey there.

HILLARY CLINTON: Hello.

LARRY KING: What's your question for the Clintons?

CALLER: Well, Larry, I noticed that neither one of them had an Obama-Biden button on. And I was wondering what to make of that.

LARRY KING: No button! This means what? You like him, you don't like him? People want to know. Hillary?

HILLARY CLINTON: Oh, my, Larry, really, this is just one more example of people reading into things. Honestly, I just got this blazer back from the cleaners and I haven't had a moment to put any kind of campaign insignia on it. And, you know, with all due respect, I think people just read into things too much.

LARRY KING: But people are confused. I mean, I'm confused! You support the ticket, right?

HILLARY CLINTON: Which ticket?

LARRY KING: The Democratic ticket.

HILLARY CLINTON: Oh, my, Larry.

LARRY KING: You support it.

HILLARY CLINTON: Larry, we've been over this and over this.

LARRY KING: So that's a "yes"?

HILLARY CLINTON: Oh, Larry, don't be silly!

LARRY KING: You support the ticket?

HILLARY CLINTON: The Democratic ticket?

LARRY KING: Right.

HILLARY CLINTON: Exactly!

LARRY KING: So, yes?

HILLARY CLINTON: The Democratic ticket! Of course!

LARRY KING: You support it?

HILLARY CLINTON: Larry, we've been over this and over this.

BILL CLINTON: Larry, if I may interject here?

LARRY KING: Go right ahead! Bill Clinton! Thoughts?

BILL CLINTON: Part of the problem here is that from about five feet away, the Obama-Biden button looks a little like an Osama bin Laden button. And I'm not saying that there's any real connection between them—

HILLARY CLINTON: No, obviously, Larry, no one is saying that Osama bin Laden and Barack Hussein Obama and Biden are connected in any way.

BILL CLINTON: But, you know, there is some confusion, and I can't speak for Hillary but I certainly feel the need to clearly and unambiguously condemn Osama bin Laden—

HILLARY CLINTON: Can I interject here? Larry, the American people should know just how hard Bill worked to fight Osama bin Laden when he was president.

BILL CLINTON: Thank you, Hillary.

HILLARY CLINTON: Honey, it was my pleasure!

BILL CLINTON: Anyway, Larry, as I was saying, I personally feel the need to condemn Osama bin Laden, and to draw as big a distinction as I can between myself—

HILLARY CLINTON: And me.

BILL CLINTON: And my wife, and Osama bin Laden as I possibly can. Maybe that's where the confusion lies. He and I are very different that way.

LARRY KING: Wait. You and he? Who's "he" again? Bin Laden?

BILL CLINTON: Obama.

LARRY KING: Osama?

HILLARY CLINTON: Do you see the problem, Larry?

LARRY KING: I'm getting a headache. Garlique, friends! Next week, losing weight with Joyce DeWitt! From Bakersfield, California! Hello!

CALLER: Hi, Larry, and hi, Mr. and Mrs. Clinton. I was wondering if the Clintons have any hard feelings about the way Obama has been campaigning, and if they have any plans to campaign for him?

LARRY KING: What about it? Miffed? Not miffed? Hurt? Not hurt?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, obviously, Larry, I wanted to win. And to some observers and supporters, I received more votes and probably should have won. And then when I was passed over for the vice-presidential slot a lot of my friends and supporters were understandably angry and confused, and some of my friends and supporters even suggested that Obama was clearly not qualified to be president, and was showing himself to be a weak and ineffectual candidate who will drag the entire Democratic party down to disaster. According to some. Of my supporters. Some of my 18 million supporters.

LARRY KING: So . . . not bitter?

HILLARY CLINTON: Oh, my, Larry.

LARRY KING: That's a "no"?

HILLARY CLINTON: Bitterness or negativity or whatever. Honestly, Larry.

LARRY KING: So, um, I'm just going to go with "not bitter," okay?

HILLARY CLINTON: Larry, we've been over this and over this.

BILL CLINTON: Larry, I'd like to interject here. Both Hillary and I are willing and able to campaign for the ticket. But we're both so busy. Me, with my international work. And Hillary with her work in Iowa and New Hampshire.

LARRY KING: Whoa! Hold the phone! Iowa and New Hampshire? Are you preparing for a 2012 run?

HILLARY CLINTON: Oh, my, Larry.

LARRY KING: Is that a "no"?

HILLARY CLINTON: Larry, we've been over this and over this.

[End of transcript]

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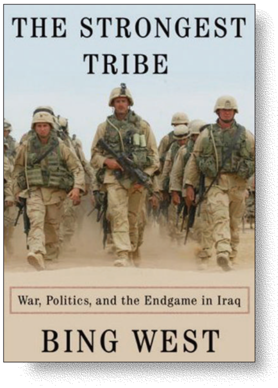

The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq, by Bing West (Random House, 448 pp., $28)

MACKUBIN THOMAS OWENS

A YEAR ago, the situation in Iraq looked bleak. The president had announced a "surge" in early 2007, fired his secretary of defense, and replaced the military leadership executing the operational strategy in Iraq, but—to many outside observers—the results by the summer appeared to be too little, too late. The American public, tired of the false optimism that had characterized so many earlier official statements, seemed to desire nothing less than the war's end.

But by the end of the year, security had improved throughout Iraq, especially in Anbar Province and in Baghdad. It has continued to improve, to the extent that even Barack Obama has admitted, albeit grudgingly, in a recent *New York Times* op-ed that the surge has reduced the level of violence in Iraq: "New tactics have protected the Iraqi population, and the Sunni tribes have rejected Al Qaeda—greatly weakening its effectiveness."

Mr. Owens is a professor of national-security affairs at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I., and editor of *Orbis*, the national-security journal of the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

This striking transformation is the topic of *The Strongest Tribe*, Bing West's third book on the Iraq War. West emerged some time ago as the most astute observer of the war. He knows both war and politics, and is therefore equally in his element whether talking to the civilians who develop policy, the generals who plan and execute the strategy derived from policy, or the front-line "grunts" who execute the operations on the ground.

The Strongest Tribe leverages West's experience as a Marine Corps infantry veteran of Vietnam, where he took part in a successful Marine counterinsurgency (CI) program, the Combined Action Platoons, in which Marines patrolled with Vietnamese farmers to provide security for their villages. Based on his experiences in Vietnam, he wrote a classic study of CI titled *The Village*. He was also a counterinsurgency analyst for RAND, in which capacity he visited Malaysia and Ulster to study British CI techniques. But West also knows how Washington works—or doesn't—based on his experience as an assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan administration.

West's thesis is simple: From the summer of 2003 until the fall of 2006, the U.S. was losing the war militarily. But since the beginning of 2007, there has been an undeniable turnaround, the result of changes made by leaders in the thick of the insurgency—men West calls "warrior kings." The turnaround resulted from the fact that the military adapted to events on the ground, eventually accepting the reality that it would have to fight a war different from the one it would have preferred to fight. These changes were finally validated by policymakers at the top.

West does not hesitate to make harsh judgments about Iraq policy and its makers. According to West, President Bush "presided more than decided, acting like the chairman of the board rather than the chief executive. He waited for his staff to produce consensus options. Once he selected an option, he considered his job done."

The chief problem with this approach was that the Pentagon did not agree with the president's vision for Iraq, especially when his rationale changed from destroying Saddam's WMD capacity to establishing democracy. The president's goal required the rebuilding of Iraq and the defeat of the emerging insurgency—but the Pentagon's vision of military operations has long been influenced by the Weinberger Doctrine, which holds that the purpose of military action is to decisively defeat an enemy in defense of clear U.S. interests, and then turn over post-conflict duties to others. Secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld, as well as the senior uniformed military, sought a quick exit of U.S. forces, leaving the problem of the insurgency to the Iraqis.

The result of these two conflicting approaches—the president seeking victory and the Pentagon hoping to extricate the military from Iraq—was an incoherent strategy. The Defense Department wanted to hand Iraq back to the Iraqis after Saddam was deposed, while the State Department wanted Amb. Paul Bremer to oversee a reconstructed Iraq, which would require a long-term U.S. military presence.

The incoherence of the strategy was exacerbated by Bremer's decision to disband the Iraqi army and to purge Baathists from government positions: This created the basis for the Sunni insurgency, which was subsequently exploited by al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) to unleash sectarian violence. It was also exacerbated by the Bush administration's lack of organizational unity, which was evident in the National Security Council—and also in the U.S. command in Baghdad, where Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority and the military's joint task force worked at cross-purposes. The result was many lost opportunities, as critical decisions bounced back and forth with no individual responsible for them.

In November 2004, Marines and soldiers wrested the city of Fallujah from the insurgents in bloody fighting. This was followed in early 2005 by the "rivers campaign," designed to destroy the insurgency in Anbar Province by depriving it of its base and infrastructure in the Sunni Triangle and its "ratlines" west and northwest of Fallujah. But while the U.S. troops were successful in disrupting insurgent operations, there were too few of them to maintain control of the towns of Anbar. The insurgents, abandoning their Fallujah approach of standing and fighting the Americans, simply melted away, only to return after Coalition troops had departed.

As the insurgency metastasized in 2005,

O JAY, CAN YOU SEE?

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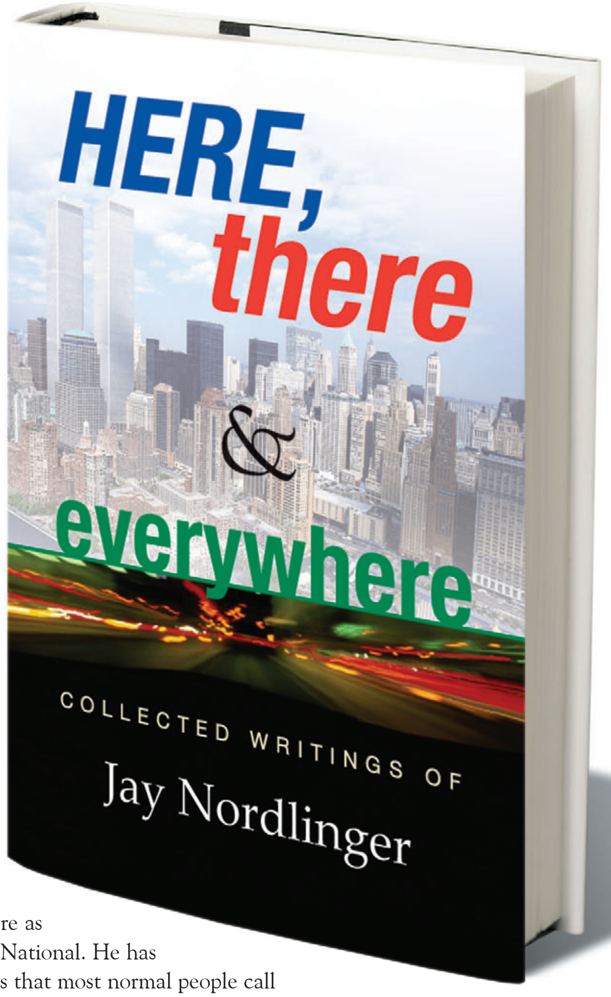

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USE SEPARATE SHEET TO REQUEST AN AUTOGRAPH AND SPECIFY INSCRIPTION the military had three viable options: continue offensive operations along the lines of those in Anbar after Fallujah, adopt a counterinsurgency approach, or emphasize the training of Iraqi troops in order to transition to Iraqi control of military operations. Gen. John Abizaid, commander of the U.S. Central Command, and Gen. George Casey, the overall commander in Iraq, chose the third option, supported by Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs chairman Gen. Richard Myers.

But while transitioning to Iraqi control was a logical option for the long run, it did little to solve the proximate problem of the insurgency, which had now generated sectarian violence. Based on the belief by many senior commanders, especially Abizaid, that U.S. troops were an "antibody" to Iraqi culture, the Americans consolidated their forces on large "forward operating bases" and sent out motorized patrols that were particularly vulnerable to attacks by improvised explosive devices. The result was to concede territory and population alike to the insurgents.

Thus, by the spring of 2006, writes West, "the coalition was losing on the two fronts that accounted for most of the fighting. In Anbar to the west, al-Qaeda controlled the population; in Baghdad to the east, Shiite death squads were driving out the Sunnis, while al-Qaeda's suicide bombings continued."

But two conditions for a turnaround were already being established, and a third would occur at the end of 2006. First, the U.S. Army and Marine Corps had developed and were in the process of adopting a new doctrine for counterinsurgency. Second, Army and Marine battalions had established partnerships with Sunni sheiks in Anbar, partnerships that formed the basis of the "Anbar Awakening" in reaction to AQI's reign of terror in the Sunni Triangle. As West observes: "The key to the turnaround on the western front was the bottom-up partnership between local leaders and U.S. battalion commanders. The locals knew who were AQI; the Americans brought the hammer."

Third, President Bush finally took charge of the war at the end of 2006. Abandoning what Eliot Cohen has called the "normal" theory of civil-military relations, which calls for a clear line of demarcation between civilians who determine the goals of the war and the uniformed military who then achieve those goals, the president announced the surge in January 2007 and replaced the Pentagon's senior civilian and military leaders with others who shared this vision. The improvements we are seeing today in Iraq are the result of the confluence of these three factors.

Bing West has many useful insights on the Iraq War. The nuggets are there for anyone willing to mine them. But two points in particular are worth noting.

The first is the danger of conducting war when American society is divided. One division, notes West, has been ideological and partisan: "Although sacrifice on a national scale is not required for every conflict, a healthy society does not treat war as an extension of domestic political competition. . . . National security cannot be sustained when domestic party affiliation and ideology determine the support for a war. Iraq was a symptom, not the cause of the ideological polarization of American society." Another division results from the deterioration of martial virtues in American society. In the 1990s, this division was described as a civilian-military "gap." West contends that "American society takes courage for granted, and the press ignores it. When we fight the next war, this attitude will poorly serve the nation. Will soldiers risk their lives, if society ignores courage?" As West observed in *No True Glory*, his 2005 book about Fallujah, stories of soldierly courage deserve "to be recorded and read by the next generation. Unsung, the noblest deed will die."

The second point concerns the endgame in Iraq. West argues that while the wisdom of invading Iraq in the first place can be debated by reasonable people, four factors should determine whether the U.S. perseveres in Iraq. First, a stable Iraq advances U.S. interests in the region. Second, any reduction of U.S. forces in Iraq should be done prudently, not in such a way as to signal that the U.S. has given up. Third, a precipitous pullout would most likely shatter Iraq, unleashing centrifugal forces. Fourth, if Iraq were to hold together in the face of a precipitous withdrawal, it would "resent America for having given up." This would have serious implications for the regional balance of power.

Our goal in Iraq should be victory, which Gen. David Petraeus defined as a "sustainable security arrangement that is increasingly one that Iraqis can take over by themselves." That we are on the brink of achieving this goal is a tribute to the American soldiers that an Iraqi colonel called "the strongest tribe." **NR**

CONSTRUAL

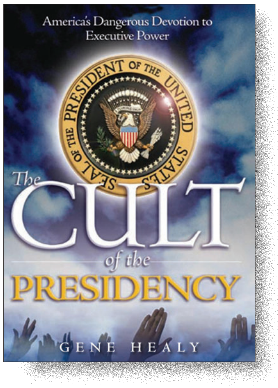
Poised on the trolley's stair-step lip, he tenses,
Shooting, from time to time, an anxious look
Down the converging tracks. Where is his stop?
A tremor seems to commandeer his senses,
Shaking the OJ quart his armpit's nook
Pins hard against him; nothing's going to drop.

In flannel Stewart plaid he barely tucks
In Carhartt pants, his figure makes one figure
Him for local, but if that's so, how come
His green and purple baseball cap says *Bucks*?
What makes him make one think him like a trigger?
What's that between his finger and his thumb?

Could it just be a Lucky Strike (unlit,
Of course), since in the other hand, he grips—
The way one holds a detonator; see?—
His Bic, impatient to get off with it,
As if there waited at his fingertips
The signaling device from *Jeopardy!*?

—LEN KRISAK

It's Not Just the Executive


America's Dangerous Devotion to Executive Power
The CULT of the PRESIDENCY
GENE HEALY

The Cult of the Presidency: America's Dangerous Devotion to Executive Power, by Gene Healy (Cato, 264 pp., $22.95)

MICHAEL M. UHLMANN

To re-turn a phrase first turned by Benjamin Cardozo, the assault upon the citadel of the presidency is proceeding in these days apace. President Bush's vigorous use of executive prerogative, hardly a novelty in time of war, seems to have unhinged many of his critics. For those of the hard Left, who imagine themselves captive to a police state run by madmen, this is par for the course; but even otherwise sober critics appear to have been done in by Bush's policies on such matters as foreign intelligence intercepts, detention and treatment of enemy combatants, and qualified signing statements. These policies entail arguable legal propositions, but they are hardly the stuff of which tyrannies are made. Nevertheless, they have driven some writers to make extravagant claims on behalf of expanded legislative power, which, it is said, will return us to the true spirit of the Founders' Constitution. Even if we ignore the historical fragilities of this spurious originalism, these critics face an enormous practical difficulty, which they have yet to address: Given a large administrative state and America's leadership in international affairs, neither of which is likely to fade anytime soon, is it possible to have a small presidency?

Gene Healy, a writer of decidedly libertarian inclination, seems to think so, but he tells us neither how to reach that goal nor why we'd be better off if we did. *The Cult of the Presidency* details a long train of real and imagined executive abuses, particularly during the past century, which Healy traces to an unhealthy preoccupation with the presidency as the be-all and end-all of American politics. The growth of the modern executive establishment, he argues, has distorted the Constitution, breeding a culture of presidential self-importance that, in turn, has corrupted Congress and the public no less than presidential incumbents and candidates. Presidents enter office with absurdly utopian agendas that feed upon and exacerbate equally utopian public expectations. We have essentially abandoned limited government and replaced it with an elective monarchy whose prerogatives Congress and the courts seem unwilling or unable to control.

The bulk of Healy's book is devoted to various sins, offenses, and negligences of the Bush administration, about which Healy says we ought to be appalled but not surprised. Bush's alleged misdeeds, he argues, are the logical culmination of ideas about presidential leadership that emerged over a century ago from the thought of Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, and later came to full fruition during the New Deal and World War II. Ever since, the FDR paradigm of presidential supremacy in foreign and domestic affairs has been emulated to a greater or lesser extent by all presidents. American conservatives, Healy correctly notes, once harbored deep suspicions about executive power (*vide* the writings of Willmoore Kendall and James Burnham), but discarded their apprehensions in the late 1960s. Alas, Healy laments, we all seem to be presidentialists now, oblivious to the dangers posed by imperial pretense at home and abroad. If we value our liberties, the discretionary powers of the presidency should be carefully defined and limited in accordance with rules laid down by Congress.

Healy's polemic, like all good polemics, hammers away at selectively chosen targets. This makes for a spirited but not necessarily persuasive argument. It's worthwhile to recount the follies and pretensions of modern presidents and presidential candidates, but given the presumptuous scope of government in our time, much the same could be done with Congress and the judiciary, without whose collaboration most of the abuses decried by Healy would not have been possible. Healy surely realizes this, but he speaks of modern presidents as if they had somehow acquired talismanic power to compel the other branches to do their will. Indeed, most of Healy's concerns about the modern presidency are really concerns about the size and arbitrariness of government in general. He longs for a simpler world, one unencumbered by the regulatory state or by imperatives of national-security policy that require the United States to project force far beyond its borders.

One can sympathize with his yearning, but it's unlikely to be fulfilled by diminishing presidential prerogative and enhancing that of Congress. In fact, Healy's recommended solution may make matters worse. Such fiscal discipline as now exists comes primarily from the executive branch. Congress will continue to expand the administrative state without executive inducements, because expansion is conducive to reelection. With respect to foreign and national-security affairs, legislators complain loudly when presidential policies go awry and, when so disposed, know how to tie a president in knots; but Congress evinces little desire or institutional capacity to manage events from Capitol Hill. We should be thankful for that. Whatever one may think of President's Bush's policies, one can hardly take comfort in the prospect of foreign and national-security policy's being directed by, say, Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid, and John Murtha. Besides, legislators already possess a sizable stockpile of constitutional weapons to deploy against errant presidents, including but not limited to the power of the purse. The problem is not lack of legislative power but lack of political will to use it.

Healy's preference for a resurgent Congress taps into a venerable rhetorical tradition that has never been far from the

Mr. Uhlmann teaches American government and law at Claremont Graduate University and Claremont McKenna College.

surface of American politics. The notion that the powers of the presidency should be narrowly construed vis-à-vis those of Congress, particularly on matters of war and peace, was first advanced by the Anti-Federalists and later endorsed by James Madison in a celebrated 1793 exchange with Alexander Hamilton. The framers of Article II, it is true, wrote with artful ambiguity, which is why we have been arguing about the proper scope of presidential discretion since 1789. But calculated ambiguity should not be confused with lack of purpose. They sought to avoid undue provocation of prevalent republican sentiment, which tended to favor legislative supremacy, but their goal was nevertheless clear: to create an independent, energetic executive vested with broad discretionary powers. The Anti-Federalists suspected as much but were unable to rouse sufficient opposition during the struggle over ratification.

> **The Framers' goal was clear: to create an independent, energetic executive vested with broad discretionary powers.**

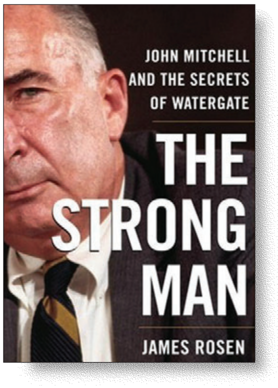
The Anti-Federalist critique of Article II failed for two reasons. First, the executive office was in large part an expression of the virtues personified by George Washington. Although, as James Madison said, no constitution could guarantee that great statesmen would always be at the helm, the powers of the presidency were drafted capaciously, in order to attract great-souled men, whose singular talents might be necessary, especially in times of crisis or war. For many, if not most, critics of the Constitution, Washington's character and reputation sufficed, at least for a time, to quiet reservations about the breadth of discretion delegated by the executive article. Once in office, Washington made clear that the nation's chief executive was not meant to be a glorified errand boy for Congress.

Second, the anti-monarchical fervor that fed revolutionary sentiment against the British crown had by 1787 given way to a new realism about the difficulties of establishing government based on the consent of the governed. The Articles of Confederation and, with few exceptions, the state constitutions adopted between 1776 and 1787 were notably characterized by feeble executives and powerful legislatures. These constitutional arrangements paid homage to the reigning republican ideas of the day, but at the price of rendering government ineffective.

The movement toward the Philadelphia Convention was prompted in no small part by the effort to correct this defect in extant constitutional forms, as *The Federalist* makes clear. That indispensable guide teaches that legislative excess is the danger chiefly to be guarded against in a republic, and that liberty is as much endangered by weak as by overly powerful government. The case for a strong presidency emerges from the confluence of these two arguments. Although that case prevailed in the state ratifying conventions and in subsequent practice, reservations about the reach of executive discretion remained.

Claims of legislative supremacy animated much political thought and practice in the early 19th century especially, but these existed side by side with arguments supporting a strong, independent executive. Much of our political history accordingly reveals alternating patterns of legislative and presidential dominance. Healy rightly identifies Woodrow Wilson as the intellectual culprit whose thought gave birth to the modern plebiscitary presidency in the late 19th century, but he doesn't take his analysis far enough, and in fact falls into Wilson's trap. Wilson believed that the Founders' Constitution created a regime of legislative supremacy. This meant that presidents were necessarily weak and that Congress would be dominated by local factions, a combination that, in Wilson's view, frustrated the achievement of a national policy agenda. His preferred solution, parliamentary government, went nowhere; his fallback alternative—a populist presidency relying on party government to bring Congress around—succeeded and has dominated American politics ever since. Healy rightly laments Wilson's influence, but presidential incapacity was not a problem when Wilson wrote, and legislative preeminence is not a solution now. **NR**

Watergate Story



The Strong Man: John Mitchell and the Secrets of Watergate, by James Rosen (Doubleday, 640 pp., $35)

DUNCAN CURRIE

THIS book is more than a biography of former U.S. attorney general John Mitchell; it is also a keen and wide-ranging study of the entire Nixon presidency. Author James Rosen, a Washington correspondent for Fox News, aims "to ensure [that] the facts and lessons of the Watergate scandals are properly recorded," and to situate Mitchell, the "highest-ranking government official ever to be convicted on criminal charges," in the context of a turbulent era in which American society seemed to be unraveling.

Upon picking up *The Strong Man*, one of my first thoughts was: How did a busy TV reporter ever find the time to produce such a door-stopper? As Rosen explains, the book represents "two decades of research, synthesis, and writing." Among his sources were "hundreds of thousands of previously undisclosed documents and tape recordings," most of which came from the Nixon Presidential Materials Project at the National Archives. He also interviewed (by his count) 250 people.

Some may question the need for yet another book on Watergate. Rosen assures his readers that "the scandal presented in *The Strong Man* is not your father's Watergate."

Mr. Currie is managing editor of *The American*.

Mitchell, who died in November 1988 at age 75, left behind relatively few personal or official papers, which makes him a tricky figure to analyze. For whatever reason, he was prone to embellishing or even fabricating stories of his Long Island youth. It appears that he also perpetuated falsehoods about his service in World War II.

He was a pioneer in housing finance ("moral-obligation bonds" were his brainchild) and proved quite successful as a Wall Street lawyer. "Sway in financial circles eased his way in political circles, and vice versa," Rosen writes. Mitchell grew close to Nelson Rockefeller, the wealthy and powerful Republican governor of New York. He also met Richard Nixon; they became law partners, and Mitchell served as Nixon's campaign manager in the 1968 presidential race.

The Nixonites have long been accused of collaborating with South Vietnamese officials to sabotage the 1968 Paris peace talks. They feared that a pre-election settlement would hurt their candidate, and were also concerned that LBJ might spring an "October Surprise" (as he did, in the form of a U.S. bombing halt announced just before Election Day). The details and significance of the 1968 South Vietnamese affair are still controversial. In particular, the murky activities of Anna Chennault—a Chinese-born woman known as "the Dragon Lady," she was prominent in GOP and China-lobby circles and served as the Nixon campaign's "primary interlocutor with Saigon"—remain hotly disputed. As Rosen notes, "the South Vietnamese needed little convincing to frown on the Paris talks." But he concludes that "Nixon and Mitchell, with the aid of Anna Chennault, violated the laws of international diplomacy, directly contacting South Vietnamese officials to urge them not to be swayed by Lyndon Johnson's last-minute bombing halt." The episode would "haunt" Nixon for years.

"At a minimum," says Rosen, it "served notice on high-level Washington, as early as the spring of 1968, that Richard Nixon and John Mitchell were men to be watched carefully. And when they assumed office, as president and attorney general of the United States, respectively, few of their peers in the intelligence community—at the Pentagon and Central Intelligence Agency, especially—forgot that lesson."

Mitchell did not want to be attorney general, but Nixon convinced him. He soon became "the very symbol of 'law and order' in Nixon's America," during what Rosen calls "the most searing political turmoil in America since the Civil War." The bald, pipe-smoking Mitchell was a bête noire of the New Left and the counterculture. As Rosen points out, he is often remembered for his August 1971 announcement that the Justice Department would *not* convene a federal grand jury to investigate the National Guardsmen who had shot student protesters at Kent State University. But the full story is more complicated. Relying on "previously unpublished notes and documents," Rosen demonstrates that Mitchell actually supported convening a grand jury on the Kent State killings, and only relented ("begrudgingly") at Nixon's insistence.

Both Mitchell and Nixon were characterized by a "duality of thought and action," as Rosen puts it. ("Watch what we do instead of what we say," Mitchell said famously.) For example: Mitchell reportedly made racist and anti-Semitic comments in private, but he also backed aggressive school-desegregation efforts, worked to guarantee voting rights for blacks, championed the cause of Israel, and helped Soviet Jews. "For America's blacks Mitchell shed no tears," says Rosen, "but to ensure racial progress he did more than any executive-branch official of the 20th century."

Though "Big John" was the ultimate Nixon loyalist, the president was not always satisfied with him. As the administration set about attacking Daniel Ellsberg, who had leaked the Pentagon Papers, Nixon complained to White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman that "John is just too damn good a lawyer, you know. He's a good, strong lawyer. It just repels him to do these horrible things, but they've got to be done." Nixon said they would be "better off" when Mitchell left his post as attorney general.

Yet at key moments, Mitchell "emerged as the indispensable figure, the strong man of the Nixon presidency," Rosen argues. In the end, "it was the twin pressures of Martha and Nixon that brought the strong man down." Martha was Mitchell's second wife, an erratic and unstable woman given to wild, alcohol-fueled outbursts. In September 1973 Mitchell finally left her, beginning a nasty divorce saga.

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By that point, he had already resigned from the Nixon administration (in 1972), and the Watergate scandals had metastasized. Who actually ordered the infamous break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters? Rosen reckons it was White House counsel John Dean, who subsequently led “the effort to funnel hush money to the burglars and their attorneys.” Dean claimed that Mitchell had given the order.

A short review cannot possibly do justice to Rosen’s near-encyclopedic treatment of Watergate. He paints Mitchell as “the fall guy,” whom the craven Nixon betrayed, though he admits that Mitchell participated in the cover-up and was guilty of suborning perjury. “That Mitchell played a role is indisputable; however, it is equally true that the former attorney general was, in simplest terms, framed, a casualty of a wicked alliance between co-conspirators eager to tell lies and prosecutors eager to believe them.” Rosen shows that Mitchell was falsely convicted of multiple offenses “largely on the strength of perjured testimony.” Sentenced in February 1975, he spent 19 months in jail. Shortly before his death in 1988, Mitchell told an interviewer that he felt “the CIA was behind the whole thing.”

Rosen maintains that Big John has been treated unfairly by history, and that his accomplishments (such as school desegregation) have been neglected or ignored. That may be true. But Mitchell comes across as a deeply flawed individual who both suborned and committed perjury to help a dysfunctional and criminal administration. In various forums, he lied about his role in the wiretapping of government officials and journalists between 1969 and 1971, about his knowledge of the U.S. military’s spying on the Nixon White House, and about the International Telephone & Telegraph scandal (though, as Rosen notes, “the central premise” of this scandal was “unproved, if not outright refuted”).

While *The Strong Man* doesn’t answer all the questions about Watergate—some of them may never be answered—it is a magnificent piece of journalism and scholarship. However low one’s opinion of Richard Nixon, that opinion will almost certainly be lower after reading this book. Revisiting the crimes and deceptions of his administration lends some much-needed perspective to our squabbles over George W. Bush. **NR**

■ **MUSIC** ■

Tales of Two Conductors

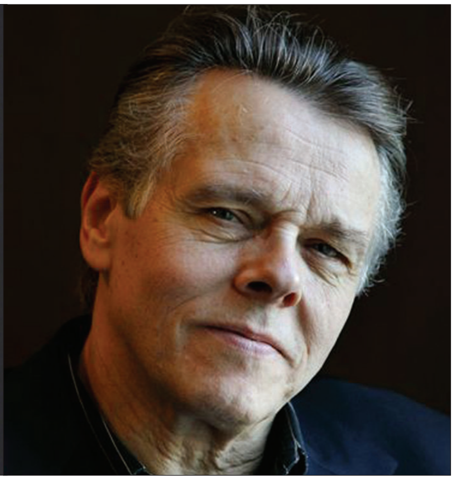
JAY NORDLINGER

Salzburg, Austria

THINGS are buzzing at the Salzburg Festival, as they usually are. You have your concerts, fetes, and fights. You also have public interviews of eminent musicians, hosted by the Salzburg Festival Society. They are conducted by an interloper from NATIONAL REVIEW.

A few years ago, as I headed off to Salzburg, Bill Buckley said to me, “Say hello to music for me!” Music is doing just fine, I’m happy to report. (But some of the opera stagings are wretched, as they predictably are.)

Franz Welser-Möst



Mariss Jansons

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This year, the Festival Society has five guests—five interviewees. Two of them are conductors, and three of them are singers. Let’s concentrate on the conductors—since they are accustomed to the spotlight. (Of course, singers—particularly opera singers—are happy to elbow anybody out of the spotlight.)

First in the seat is Franz Welser-Möst, music director of the Cleveland Orchestra, which is doing a residency here. He is a native son—born in Linz. (No fair saying who else hailed from Linz—better to remember that city for chocolate.) In 2010, Welser-Möst will assume the biggest music job in all of Austria, while retaining his Cleveland post. I’m talking about general music director of the Vienna State Opera. At 48, this conductor is riding high.

I expected a rather formal, correct, buttoned-down man—he can give that impression onstage. Instead, he is casual, relaxed, and amusing. He wears a peach golf shirt, and his speech is similarly laid-back. In fact, he sounds like an American—saying “freak out,” for example. Later, an audience member will remark that he half-expected the maestro to say “dude.”

But make no mistake: Welser-Möst is a very brainy guy. And, with his wire-rimmed glasses, he reminds some people of his fellow Austrian Mahler—also of an earlier Austrian, Schubert.

Welser-Möst was considerably influenced by two conductors whose rehearsals he often attended: Sergiu Celibidache and Herbert von Karajan. He also had the rare privilege of seeing Yevgeny Mravinsky, for 50 years the boss of the Leningrad Philharmonic. Mravinsky made very few appearances in the West; young Welser-Möst caught one of the last ones. (The program was the Bruckner Ninth.)

I ask whether we’ve lost something, now that the days of podium dictators are over. Were things better that way? No, says Welser-Möst: “You can have authority without being a pain in the neck.” This is true, he says, whether you run an orchestra, a bank, or a football team. He calls up a memory about George Szell, the late, great conductor in Cleveland. (He ran a tight ship, to say the least.) It was said that when Szell entered Severance Hall, even the columns stood straighter.

The question of nationality in music-making is a perpetual one: Does it make a difference? What role does it play? Welser-Möst allows that it matters how you were brought up. But “any musician can learn a musical language.” Some people said he had no business conducting *Peter Grimes* (the opera by Benjamin Britten). “I said, ‘Then how can Simon Rattle [a Brit] conduct *Don Giovanni*?’”

There has been a slight kerfuffle here at the festival over the Cleveland Orchestra’s foray into opera: They’re in the pit for *Rusalka*, the opera by Dvořák. The Vienna Philharmonic is the big orchestra around here—this is their summer home (whereas the Cleveland is a mere visitor). Apparently, some Viennese grumbled, “We have more Czech grandmothers in our orchestra than they do in theirs”—meaning that there are more grandsons of Czechs in the Vienna Phil. than in the Cleveland Orchestra. The Clevelanders responded, “Don’t be so sure”—and they were quite right.

Besides, the question is pretty much—indeed, entirely—irrelevant.

In the course of our conversation, I mention that there is a relatively new desire for youth on the podium—I hear this in New York, especially. “Get rid of the fogy, and bring in young blood.” What does Welser-Möst think of this? “It is a sickness of our time”—this preference or demand for youth. “Conducting is very much about experience. I first conducted 25 years ago, and when I think about how much I’ve learned, it’s amazing.” Time can be an invaluable asset. And “you learn by doing.”

You also learn by failing, says Welser-Möst—and it’s better to fail in a quiet place than in a major capital. “I failed in London,” he casually states, referring to an earlier job. “I had a very rough ride there.” (Nasty critics called him, not Franz Welser-Möst, but Frankly Worse Than Most.) Shortly after, he was hired at the Zurich Opera, where he conducted over 500 performances of about 55 works. And he grew in authority all the while.

In Vienna, he says, “They’ll kill me, sooner or later”—the Austrian capital, too, can be a rough town. But Welser-Möst is very assured, “centered,” as some psychological types say.

I ask a frequent question of mine: “Are there contemporary composers worth listening to?” Welser-Möst puts in votes for Thomas Adès and Osvaldo Golijov. And, somehow, the question of hair comes up: Audiences notice a conductor’s hair, seeing relatively little of him. “And the butt,” says Welser-Möst—don’t forget that. Women have reported this to him.

And, yes, though Welser-Möst is cerebral, he’s no stiff, that’s for sure.

Mariss Jansons, like Welser-Möst, has plenty of hair, and loads of talent. He has two big orchestras right now: the Royal Concertgebouw in Amsterdam and the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Munich. In prior times, he led orchestras in Oslo and Pittsburgh, and they were in excellent shape.

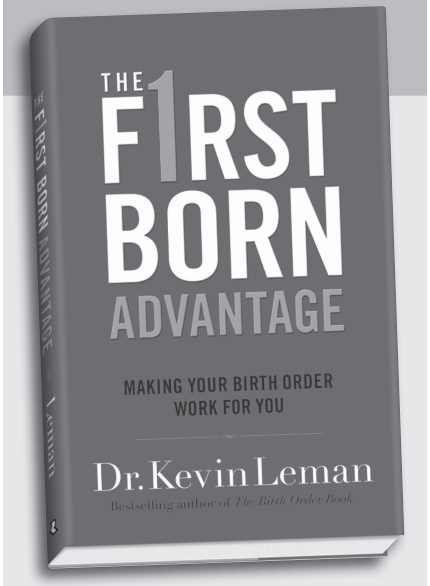
He was born in Riga in 1943—you can think of a more favorable environment. His mother, who was Jewish, gave birth in hiding. Her father and brother had already been killed by the Gestapo; she was worried for her son. She was a singer (named Iraida); her husband, Arvīd, was a conductor. He would serve as assistant to Mravinsky in Leningrad. Years later, Mariss would fill the same role.

He grew up in opera houses and concert halls. As a tyke, he would “play conductor”—pretend to be a conductor. And he knew a lot. He even knew the dance steps he observed at ballet rehearsals. He studied the violin, and was quite good. But his destiny was pretty much set: He would be a conductor.

Everyone was around in those days, and young Jansons rubbed shoulders with them. By “everyone,” I mean all the big Russian musicians: Oistrakh, Gilels, Richter, Rostropovich—and, above all, Shostakovich, an all-time genius. One day, Shostakovich called Rostropovich and said he urgently needed to see him. “Slava” rushed over. And then the two sat in simple silence for a full two hours, as Shostakovich wanted.

Mravinsky, Jansons describes as tall, severe, and demanding—“the orchestra was incredibly afraid of him.” And he had “a hypnotic effect” on everyone, says Jansons. He walked into the room, and even the big, famous musicians “were paralyzed.” And yet Mravinsky was not a mere martinet—far from it. He would not only tell an orchestra what was wrong (as some people do); he would be very clear about what was needed.

Like everyone else, Jansons had to cope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with the Soviet "dictatorship," as he repeatedly calls it. For instance, Karajan invited him to be his assistant in Berlin. Jansons found out about it—three years later. The dictatorship had never let him know. And Karajan was "furious" (as the man was apt to be).

How about relations between father and son? There have been several father-son conducting combinations in history—one thinks, for example, of Erich and Carlos Kleiber. (Erich was terrible about Carlos.) Jansons says that there were no problems between his father and him. The only difficulty lay in this: He, the son, had to be much, much better than all his peers, lest anyone think he benefited from favoritism.

We cover a range of subjects, including contemporary opera productions ("Very few conductors have the courage to stand up to the worst stuff") and acoustics ("You can't really refurbish or improve a hall—better to tear it down and build something new"). And we eventually get to this question of young conductors. Jansons agrees with Welser-Möst: Many young conductors are being pushed too far and too fast.

He recalls attending a rehearsal of Rafael Kubelík, long ago. Afterward, he went up to the great man and asked how to handle a particular transition in the choral movement of Beethoven's Ninth. After his own rehearsals, he says, young conductors are apt to thrust CDs into his hand (their demos), asking him to listen to them. Alternatively, they ask for help finding a manager. This is a troublesome trend, Jansons says—mere careerism.

As for composers, he names a few, or more than a few. He first lists some senior composers, including Penderecki, Pärt, and Kancheli. Then he pauses to make special mention of a young composer he met in Pittsburgh: Michael Hersch.

People say that an encounter with Jansons leaves an impression on you, and I can confirm this. He is an intense, soulful, and compelling man. He also exudes the qualities of a leader. At the end of the hour, I ask a strange question: whether he still likes music, after a lifetime with it, starting from infancy. He gets an almost mystical smile on his face. "Oh, yes," he says. "I couldn't live without music, and I couldn't live without conducting."

If you know his work, you wouldn't want him to. **NR**

■ **FILM** ■

Hit and Miss

ROSS DOUTHAT

THIS era's comedies may not be remembered as the funniest in American cinematic history, but they're certainly among the most inventive and unpredictable. The well-worn genre staples—sub-*Airplane!* spoofs, teen sex comedies, glorified *Saturday Night Live* sketches, bad Eddie Murphy vehicles—are still going reasonably strong, but ever since the late 1990s they've been eclipsed by a more gonzo sensibility. The Farrelly brothers kicked off this anything-goes era with feast-of-fools extravaganzas like *Kingpin*, *Dumb and Dumber*, and *There's Something about Mary*, but two overlapping posses have come to dominate the landscape: the so-called Frat Pack, consisting of Ben Stiller, Will Ferrell, Vince Vaughn, and several others, and the more junior crew that's come of age under Judd Apatow's direction.

Both these gangs produce films that fairly revel in their unclassifiability, blending comedic subgenres with wild abandon and making up new ones out of whole cloth (I defy you to fit *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy* into any preexisting paradigm). And both seem to have the ability, born of steady box-office success, to get just about any production green-lit, and to induce just about anybody to star in it. The Hollywood system, steadily fine-tuned to stifle madcap creativity ever since fiascos like *Heaven's Gate* brought the auteur era to an end, seems to have broken down where comedy is concerned: If you're a friend of Stiller or a protégé of Apatow, you can do whatever the heck you want.

Sometimes this is good news for moviegoers; sometimes, though, you wish that some philistine producer had stepped in to do a little stifling. This year's two biggest late-summer comedies—the Stiller-directed *Tropic Thunder* and *Pineapple Express*, another writer-star outing for Apatow's pal Seth Rogen—occupy the two poles in this regard: One is scattershot, over-the-top, and largely hilarious, the other is a long hard slog through a script that should have been fed through the rewrite machine, or maybe through the shredder.

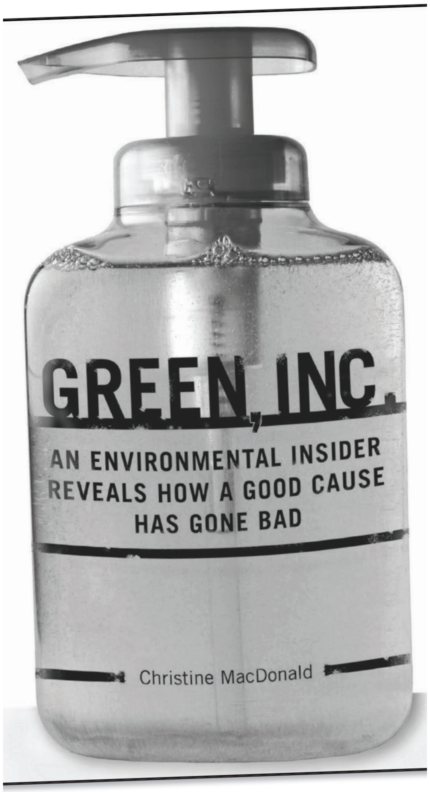
Thunder, the success story, is three parodies rolled into one: It's a send-up of war movies, of self-serious making-of documentaries, and of the movie business itself. A trio of fake trailers kick things off, introducing us to our heroes—the action star Tugg Speedman (Stiller), whose *Scorcher* franchise has reached its sixth and lamest installment; the gross-out comedian Jeff Portnoy (Jack Black), playing multiple roles, Eddie Murphy–style, in *The Fatties: Fart 2*; and the Australian method actor Kirk Lazarus (Robert Downey Jr.), headlining a *Brokeback Mountain*–style message movie about gay medieval monks. (I won't spoil the title.) All three have been cast in the movie-within-the-movie, a Coppola-esque Vietnam epic that's managed to fall a month behind schedule just five days in. And all three have crosses to bear: Portnoy can't kick his heroin addiction; Speedman is trying to recover from his disastrous attempt at an Oscar-bait performance (playing a mentally challenged farmhand in a film called *Simple Jack*); and Lazarus is taking the biggest risk of his career, donning surgically enhanced blackface and an Uncle Ben accent to play a black Army cook.

Meanwhile, the film's inexperienced director (Steve Coogan) is constantly being bullied, via videophone, by the mogul bankrolling the movie, who's a holy terror—bearded, balding, portly, profane, and played by Tom Cruise, in a bit of stunt-casting that's funnier than the part itself. Eventually, the director is driven sufficiently round the bend that he lets the crazy, wild-bearded, double-amputee Vietnam vet (Nick Nolte, more or less playing himself) whose memoir they're filming talk him into making the movie guerrilla-style, by dumping the actors into the deep, deep jungle and filming them as they try to find their way out. Or shoot their way out, as the case may be, because it doesn't take very long before the spoiled thespians find themselves lost in Asia's Golden Triangle, trading fire with a heavily armed drug gang.

Tropic Thunder's comedy is hit and miss, like an actor with an Uzi, and it doesn't achieve the kind of sustained, sincere lunacy that made Stiller's last outing in the director's chair—the male-model comedy *Zoolander*—such a classic. But the movie manages sustained bursts of hilarity, and its highs (those trailers, Stiller tangling with a panda, Cruise's producer negotiating with the drug gang, Downey Jr.'s entire tightrope-walk of a performance) are considerably higher than anything in the stoner action-comedy *Pineapple Express*—with the possible exception of the stoners themselves.

Express follows the misadventures of two pothead pals, a process server named Dale Denton (Seth Rogen) and his dealer Saul (James Franco), after Dale accidentally witnesses a gangland hit while getting high off a supercharged brand of pot called Pineapple Express. The movie is cut from the same cloth as last summer's hit *Superbad*: It's a shaggy, foul-mouthed paean to male bonding, co-written, like *Superbad*, by Rogen and Evan Goldberg, and directed, like *Superbad*, by someone crossing over from the art-house world (Greg Mottola last year, David Gordon Green this time around). And it boasts two killer performances—from Franco, playing a long-haired holy fool instead of the dull matinee roles he's usually stuck with, and from the nearly unknown Danny R. McBride (who also has a small part in *Tropic Thunder*), as the middleman between Franco's dealer and the drug lords who supply him.

But they can't compensate for the sustained self-indulgence of the script, in which tedious stoner banter is gradually eclipsed by over-the-top violence that's too real to be funny, and too silly to be real. Worse, they can't compensate for Rogen himself, whose career achieved lift-off with last year's *Knocked Up*, but whose comedic style is already outwearing its welcome. No matter the movie, he's always the same guy—quick with the one-liners, easily exasperated, and slightly too smart for his slacker lifestyle. This can be funny, but where comedy is concerned too much familiarity breeds boredom, and Rogen isn't showing us anything new. In *Pineapple Express*, the stakes get really high really fast, with explosions and car chases and kidnappings and shoot-outs, and he responds by dialing the exasperation way, way up, until he seems like he might asphyxiate from the strain. But they don't give Oscars for effort, and all his huffing and puffing can't raise enough laughs to justify sitting through a comedy whose stoner self-indulgence should have been nipped in the bud. **NR**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■ COUNTRY LIFE ■

Built To Last

RICHARD BROOKHISER

WHEN my mother-in-law moved into assisted living, we went to Ohio to clean out her house, and a friend drove out in a rented van to help. My wife and I concentrated on retrieving items of beauty or sentiment—Fiesta dishes, old silverware (the dishes that were given away as premiums with refrigerators now seem beautiful, the unwieldy silver has sunk to the level of sentiment). Our friend told us to take the washing machine.

We were outfitting a weekend house upstate. Why not buy a new washing machine there? "Take this one," he advised.

The washing machine dated from the Kennedy administration. Cars still had vestigial tail fins then, narrow and straight as rulers. Neckties and the brims of men's hats were equally slim and snappy. The control panel of the washing machine, encased in a thin silver frame, had the same look. Your grandmother's control panel, it implied, had to be protected from the elements—downpours, blizzards—but now, on the New Frontier, all we need is a sleek design element. H. G. Wells's washing machine would have had a plump porcelain dial, like the taps in an old hotel bathtub. Flash Gordon's would have had the Chrysler Building's panache. This was a dial the leader of the free world might twist to summon James Bond or Marilyn Monroe. Paisley and bad trips were still over the horizon. The washing machine, it goes without saying, was white.

Most of it, it seemed, was metal. It was made during the last stand of ore. *Plastic* would be one of the swear words of the late Sixties; *plastics* was a punchline in *The Graduate*, the soulless future that beckoned to its soon-to-be rebellious hero. Look around, and say who has had the last laugh. Everything baby boomers and their children and grandchildren use is plastic, from pens to computers to bumpers and rear-view mirrors. All these implements are lightweight, which means they get more miles per gallon if they move. But they are also junky, so after any mishap, from running out of ink to being rear-ended, you throw your tool away, either because it cannot be hammered back into shape, or because it is simply cheaper to get a new one.

The washing machine was made in heavier times. Moving so much metal took muscle. Our friend had a dolly, and there was a long enough board in my mother-in-law's garage to serve as a ramp. As the pyramids were heave-ho'd into place, so the washing machine got loaded into the van. When it arrived at our country house, the way down was (somewhat) easier than the way up. And there, for seven or eight years, it washed out clothes, sitting in the mud room next to its companion, a new dryer.

The washing machine dated from the Kennedy administration. Neckties and the brims of men's hats were equally slim and snappy.

Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton had come and gone. Another Bush is coming to the end of his cycle. Any household item that lasts that long seems like an old retainer in *Waverley* or *Gone with the Wind*. We impute character traits to it: sturdiness, loyalty. But all it is doing is converting inputs to outputs in response to commands.

Then, one day, it went on the fritz. If you set the dial, the machine filled with water and began to agitate. But it would not move to the next stage on its own. It was as if Bond refused to pull the trigger, or Monroe . . . never mind. Our friend who had helped us move it came to look. He can do almost anything from art to engine blocks, but this made him pause. He noted a second problem—a damp spot on the floor behind the machine's left rear corner. It was time to call in help.

The washing machine, I expect I have shown, is a bit of an antique. Now we encountered another. The store that sold us the dryer is a family business, over the ridge on a nondescript stretch of state road. It would be surrounded by fields if the fields hadn't all gone to brush. We drove over to see what models they had on the floor; but the salesman, who is also the co-owner, told us to speak with his brother, who handles repairs, before we bought anything. He was on the road just then, repairing, so we called later. When we got him (he and his brother sound alike) he asked for the model number and a description of the problems. Don't buy a new one, he said. Even the new models sold by the very company that made our machine—a firm famous for reliability—are not as good as what they once made: what we now had. I have already repaired your new dryer once, he pointed out. If I come out and fix your washing machine, it will be good for another 40 years. He offered a bit of advice of the kind you never find in instruction manuals: Don't use the gentle cycle, it stresses the motor. It was a deal. Ten dollars bought a new pipe to replace the rear pipe that had leaked, $90 bought a new timer, $85 bought the expert's labor.

We make a romance of the era that is ending. In a Thomas Hardy novel the knowledgeable brothers and our washing machine would be symbols of a soulless future, abolishing the customs, old as the Romans, of village women taking their washing to the river and singing old carols while they slapped and wrung the clothes (they had songs for the occasion because they washed so seldom). But it is equally snobbish to look down on what we know simply because we have known it.

"Give us the tools, and we will finish the job," Winston Churchill offered. Once we had long-lived tools and men whose job it was to know them. Now we have derivatives. Those are tools too, but I don't have any in my house (though I am sure they hover over my pension). **NR**

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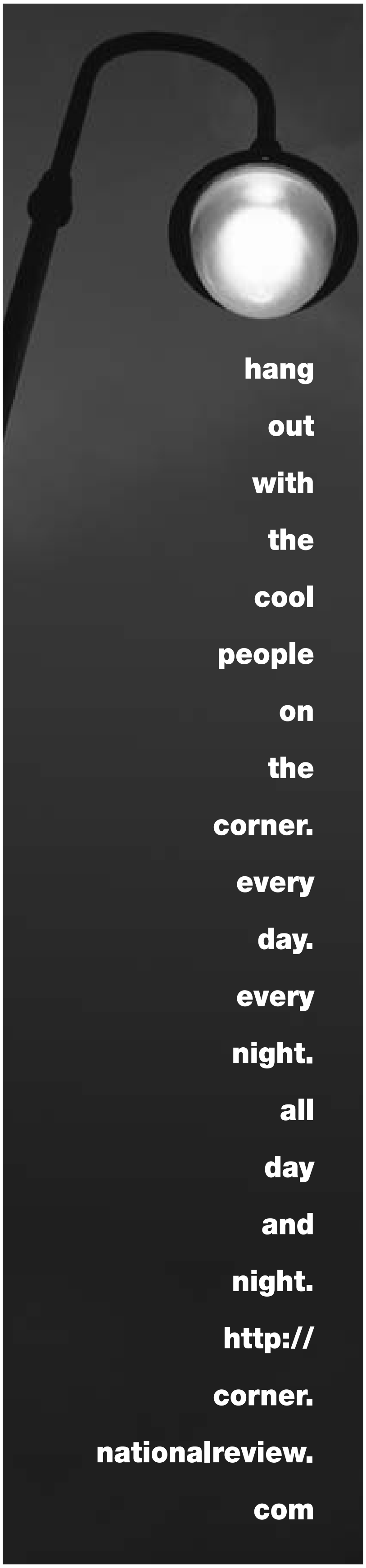

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CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY

Just In from our Stinky Cove Desk

THIS will not be a column of incisive or inside political observation, so if you're looking for that please turn to any other page of this issue of NATIONAL REVIEW. Gosh knows this is an exciting time politically, what with last week's Democratic convention and this week's Republican convention. (Oh, the *humanity* . . .) And now the general election just kicking off—how quickly these last 19 months have flown by!—and it looking to be a real lulu of a campaign. But this will not be a column about "The Five Things That McCain Must Do" or about "Obama's October Strategy" or "Biden's Plagiarism Problem and Why It Won't Go Away." This is a column about The End of Summer.

In a few days I will pack up the little studio in Maine, load up my dog, the Faithful Hound Jake, and drive back to Washington. Doing this with all these politics going on right now is like doing what George Clooney does in *The Perfect Storm*—heading right into the belly of the beast. And though I derive a significant portion of my daily bread by making fun of the American political system, honestly, I'd rather stay in Maine. Here at least there is a sort of logic to the world that I observe through the windows of the cabin looking out on Stinky Cove.

I know, I know, but that *is* its name. It derives from the days before a Republican (ahem) president created the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. The stuff got flushed directly into the cove, which is tidal, and at low tide on a warm day people held their noses. These days, I hold my breath it's so beautiful. Large blue herons land early in the morning and stalk in the mud. They look incredibly elegant but also furtive, as though they're about to pick someone's pocket. Watching them as I sip my first cup of coffee around dawn, I hear in my mind the song "Walk Like an Egyptian." Then there are the hummingbirds. Don't get me started on those. The stories I could tell you.

Let me admit here that I am not an expert on hummingbirds, although watching them through another window in the kitchen, I sometimes fantasize about spending the rest of my life studying them. CNN and Fox News would then have me on whenever there was a major hummingbird story. The chyron would identify me as "Christopher Buckley—Hummingbird Authority." I would say to the anchor, "Well, Brit, what most people do not realize about hummingbirds is that they are capable of flying at Mach 2." This would not be technically true, but it would get a lot of people talking about hummingbirds, which, in turn, would be good for us in the hummingbird-authority business.

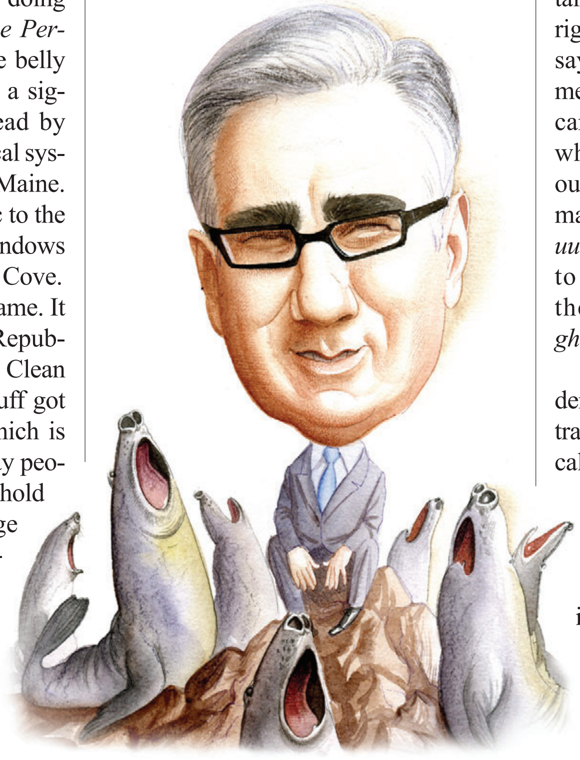
Pretty much the entire avian food chain is represented here on Stinky Cove. We have hummingbirds, and we have American eagles. As a Republican, I feel very strongly about the eagles, and I salute them when they fly by. I do this in part to annoy the Democrats who live on the cove. It's a subtle way of saying, "I guess Democrats don't love our country quite as much as we Republicans do."

We also have sandpipers, terns, seagulls (well, everyone has seagulls), owls, loons, cormorants, and ospreys. Ospreys—do you have a minute? Ospreys are generally thought to be extremely clever, but I can tell you from personal experience that this is not universally true. A few years ago during the cocktail hour, we watched one osprey dive and miss his mackerel, must have been twelve times in a row. It was getting a bit, well, pathetic toward the end there. I was going to row out and catch one for him just to get it over with, but then he finally got it. He went off and ate it out of sight where the other ospreys wouldn't laugh at him, I imagine.

I should mention the seals, and here too prepare to have some of your cherished stereotypes shattered about how wonderful they are. The seals will gather at night—dozens of them; or more: we're talking *major* amount of seals—on a rock right off Stinky Cove, and belch. When I say belch, I'm not trying to be funny. I mean, literally belch. And loudly. Sound carries over water, especially at night when the water is like glass. You'll be out on the porch listening to the loons making a lovely *wuhuhuhuhuhuuu huuuuuuuuu* sound, like the soundtrack to a Longfellow poem or something, and then—*bluuuuuuhhaaaaaaaarrrrggghhhh!*

Seals. The first time I heard it, I shuddered. It was unworldly, like the soundtrack to Canto 32 of *Inferno*. I was able to calm myself down by making a little joke that these unearthly sounds translated to "I can't believe I ate the whole school." But it's nervous laughter, at best, frankly. Thinking about the seals is enough to make me feel good about loading up the car and getting back to D.C., and listening to Keith Olbermann belch every night.

Well, almost. **NR**



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